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ROMAN BRITAIN'S LAST FRONTIER

# HISTORY

MAGAZINE

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HOW THE  
**NAVY**  
WON THE  
BATTLE OF  
BRITAIN

## DEADLY RIVALS

Why Mary, Queen of Scots  
fell foul of Elizabeth I



Lenin, Gandhi  
or Thatcher:  
**Which leader  
mattered most?**



**Anglo-Saxon  
beasts of death**

**Queen Anne's  
feuding favourites**

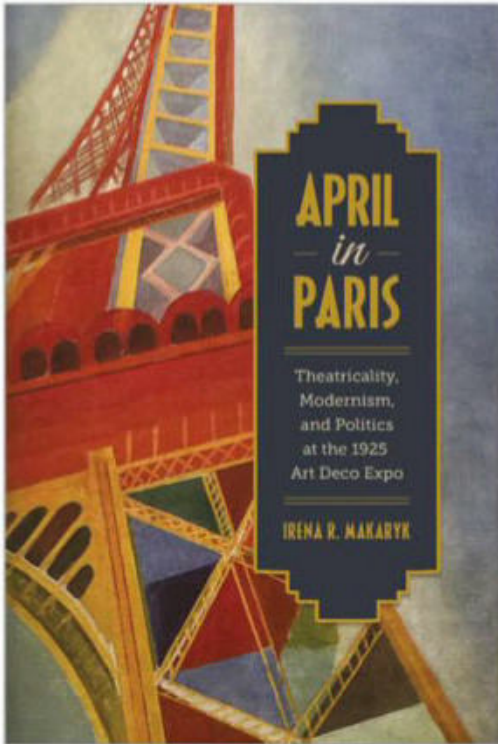
**PLUS**

**THE TREATY OF VERSAILLES  
A PEACE THAT BROUGHT WAR?**





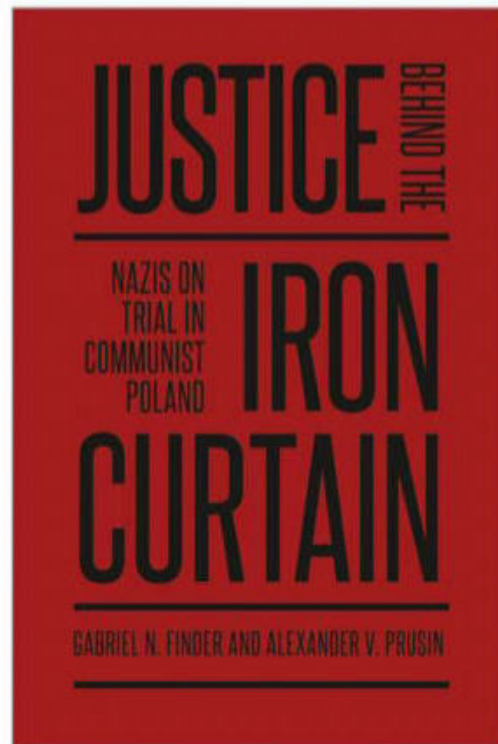
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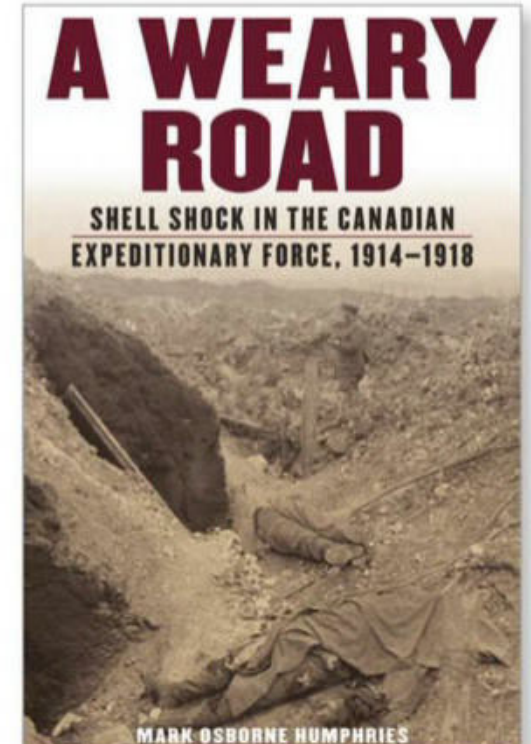
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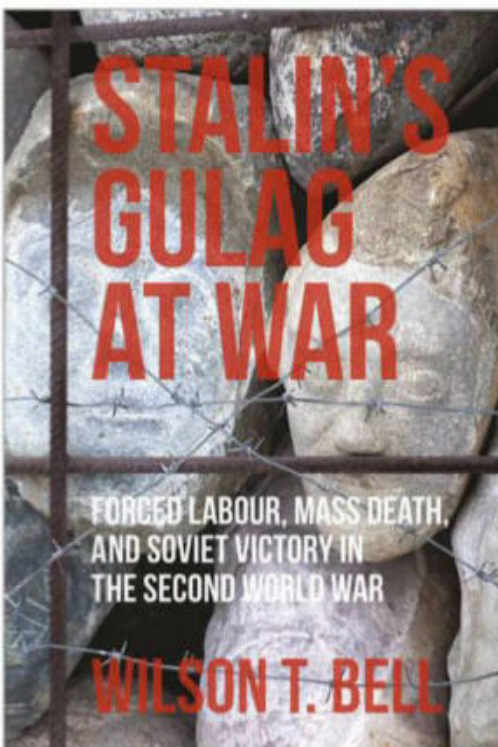
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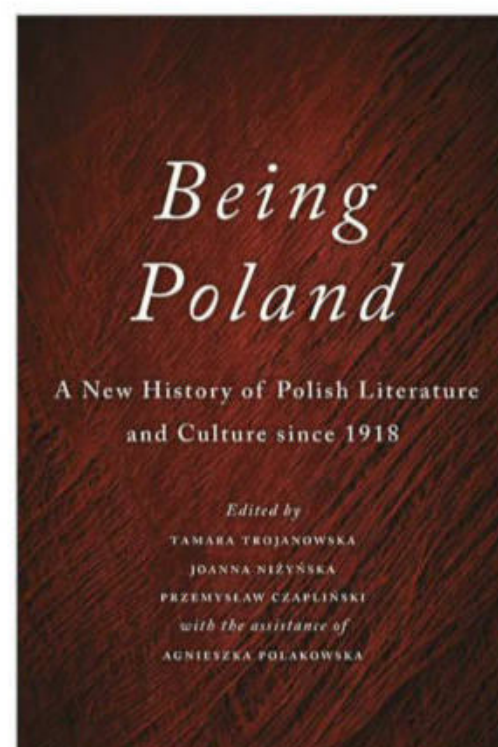
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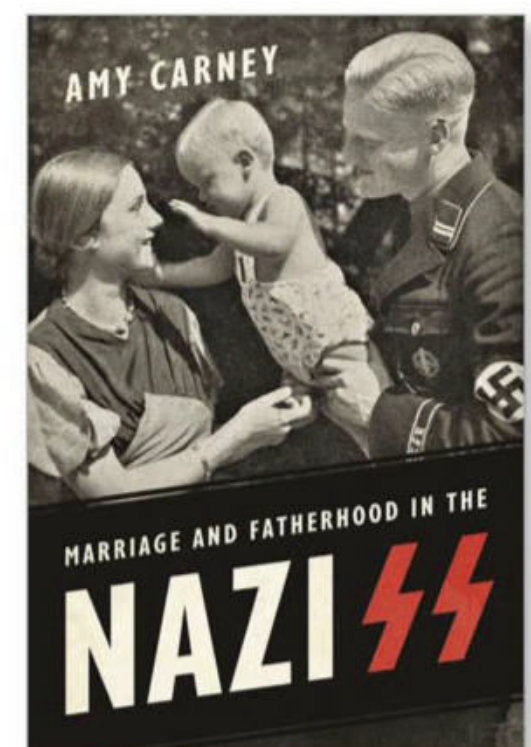
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JANUARY 2019

# WELCOME

**BBC**  
**HiSTORY**  
MAGAZINE

“Welcome to our first issue of 2019. If you’re looking to escape the January blues this month then a trip to the cinema might well be in order as two major historical films will soon be hitting the screens. First up is *The Favourite*, which stars Olivia Colman and takes a **somewhat unconventional look at the Stuart court**. That’s followed by Tudor biopic *Mary Queen of Scots*, which is based on a biography by historian John Guy.

In this month’s edition we bring you the history behind both of these films. In our cover feature, on page 40, Kate Williams considers who was ultimately responsible for **Mary, Queen of Scots’ downfall**. Was it Elizabeth I, Lord Darnley or even Mary herself? Then, on page 60, Hannah Greig, consultant on *The Favourite*, shows how the woman-dominated royal court presented on screen isn’t too far from reality.

One hundred years ago this month, the world was still trying to cope with the aftermath of war. Seeking to shape the peace, the victorious leaders met in Paris for a conference that would ultimately produce five treaties, including the **Treaty of Versailles**, which dealt with Germany. Over the subsequent century, the peacemakers of 1919 have been regularly criticised for the harshness of the postwar settlement. This, it’s argued, paved the way for another global conflict just 20 years later. But in this month’s essay, on page 31, David Reynolds argues that we should be **more sympathetic to the Allied leaders** and the predicament they faced. It’s a topic that continues to provoke debate, so please let us know what you think.



**Rob Attar**  
Editor

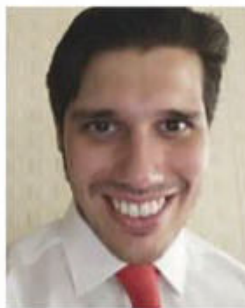
## THIS ISSUE'S CONTRIBUTORS



**Hannah Greig**  
Acting as historical consultant to *The Favourite* provided a welcome opportunity to revisit my research and long standing interest in the early 18th century court and the politically influential women who surrounded it.  
● **Hannah introduces us to the powerful women of Queen Anne’s febrile court on page 60**



**Piers Brendon**  
My feature on 20th century leaders reflects themes in my most ambitious book, *The Dark Valley: A Panorama of the 1930s*. This opens up the age through mini studies of key figures such as Churchill, Roosevelt, Stalin, Hitler, Mussolini, Franco and Mao Zedong.  
● **Piers reappraises the Great Man theory of history on page 20**



**Eric Lacey**  
The Anglo Saxons were astute observers of their natural world. This is sometimes overlooked because they rationalised it through recourse to supernatural agency.  
● **Eric explores how 10th-century Anglo-Saxon warriors would have reacted to seeing wolves, ravens and eagles on the battlefield on page 47**

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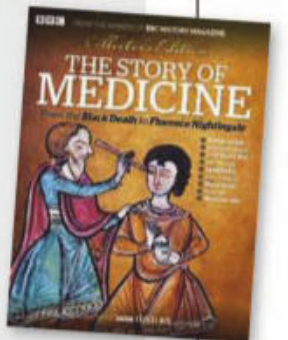
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WAS TO FLEE  
TO ENGLAND  
AFTER SHE  
LOST HER  
THRONE”**





**Dominic Sandbrook** highlights events that took place in **January** in history

# ANNIVERSARIES

10 January 1776

## Thomas Paine gives Americans common cause

*A political pamphlet becomes a publishing sensation – and sows the seeds for independence*

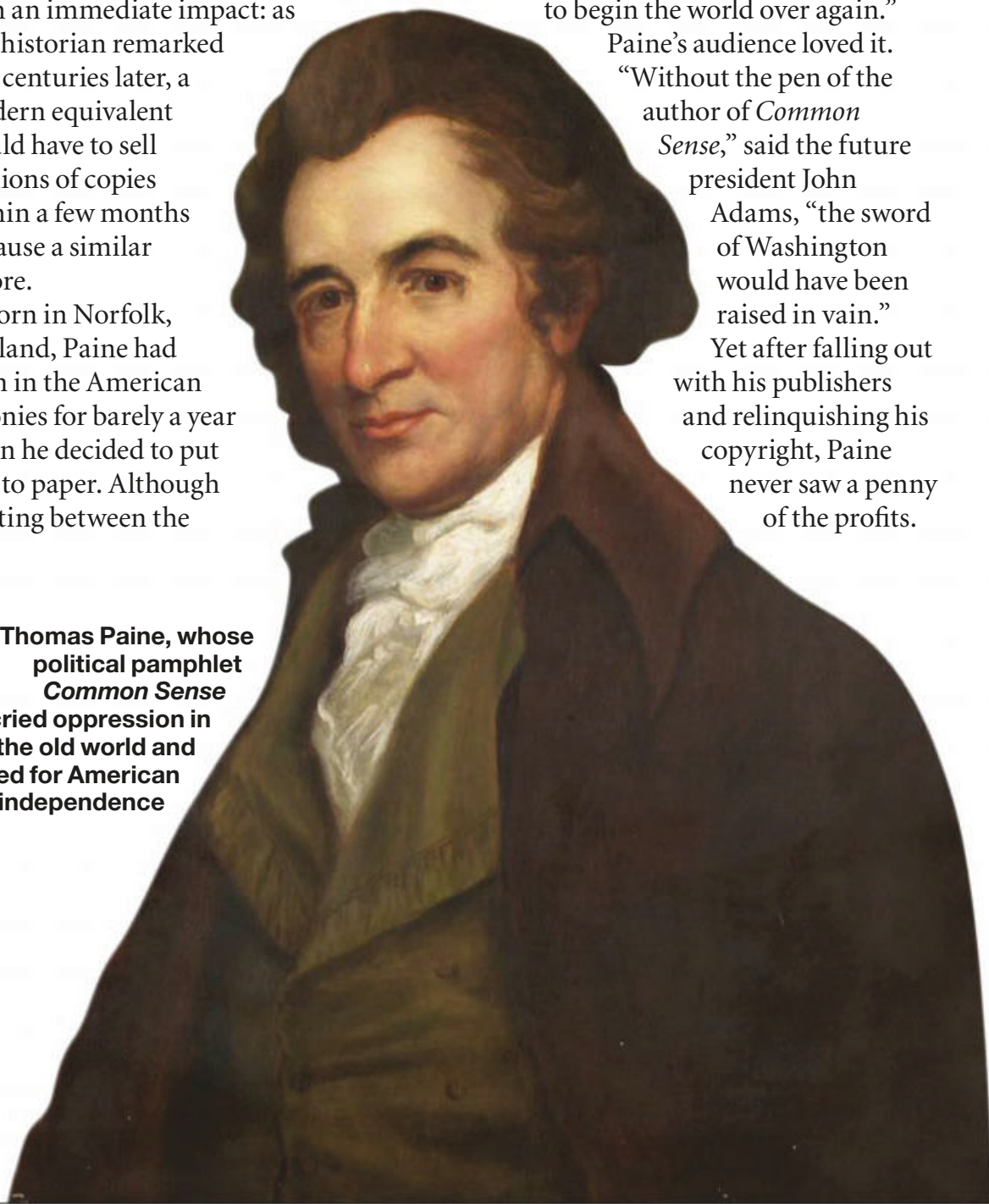
**F**ew pamphlets have ever caused a greater stir than Thomas Paine's *Common Sense*. After it was published in Philadelphia on 10 January 1776, it became a huge success in the American colonies and was popular in Britain and France too. Such was the demand that in the first year alone it went through some 25 editions, not including summaries and copies. Probably no printed publication in history had ever had such an immediate impact: as one historian remarked two centuries later, a modern equivalent would have to sell millions of copies within a few months to cause a similar furore.

Born in Norfolk, England, Paine had been in the American colonies for barely a year when he decided to put pen to paper. Although fighting between the

colonists and the British had already broken out, the rebels had not yet committed themselves to independence. This was where *Common Sense* came in. The American cause, said Paine, was the "cause of all mankind... Every spot of the old world is overrun with oppression... We have every opportunity and every encouragement before us, to form the noblest, purest constitution on the face of the earth. We have it in our power to begin the world over again."

Paine's audience loved it. "Without the pen of the author of *Common Sense*," said the future president John Adams, "the sword of Washington would have been raised in vain." Yet after falling out with his publishers and relinquishing his copyright, Paine never saw a penny of the profits.

Thomas Paine, whose political pamphlet *Common Sense* decried oppression in the old world and rallied for American independence



10 January 1863

## Tunnel vision comes to fruition

*The London Underground opens to a sceptical public*

**F**or its critics, the arrival of the London Underground marked the moment the capital descended into bedlam. The idea of a subterranean train had first been mooted in the 1840s, but work did not begin on what became the Metropolitan Railway until 1860.

What sceptics called "the Drain" was not universally popular. Some warned that the tunnels would collapse under the weight of the houses above; others thought an underground railway so infernal that convicted criminals should be "condemned to round trips". And the construction work infuriated locals. It was all a "monstrous tyranny and oppression", one grumbled.

But by January 1863, the first trains were ready to roll. On Friday 9 January, a special train packed with politicians made the first journey – though the prime minister, Lord Palmerston, declined to join then, explaining that at the age of 78, he wanted to spend as much time above ground as possible. All went well, and the next day, Saturday 10 January, it opened to the public.

To general astonishment, the capital's new Underground proved a triumphant success. On that first day alone, 38,000 people descended into the earth to ride between Farringdon Street and Bishop's Road, Paddington. The carriages were divided into three classes and lit by gas; as one pleasantly surprised passenger put it, they were "so lofty that a six-footer may stand erect with his hat on".

"For the first time in the history of the world," said *The Daily News*, "men can travel in pleasant carriages, and with considerable comfort, lower down than gas pipes and water pipes... lower down than the graveyard."

BRIDGEMAN



**Dominic Sandbrook** is a historian and presenter. His Radio 4 show on *The Real Summer of Love* is available at Archive on 4



BRIDGEMAN

Directors and engineers of the Metropolitan Railway Company inspect the London Underground in c1862. The capital's innovative new mode of public transport opened the next year and, says Dominic Sandbrook, "proved a triumphant success, to general astonishment"





**19 January 1419**  
After a long and bitter siege, the city of **Rouen** surrenders to **Henry V**, handing him complete control of Normandy.



**25 January 1858**  
**Felix Mendelssohn's Wedding March** is played at the wedding of Queen Victoria's daughter, making it the best known of all wedding marches.

**4 January 1999**  
The former **WWF** wrestler **Jesse 'The Body' Ventura** becomes the 38th governor of the US state of Minnesota.



A 14th-century French illustration shows alchemists at work. Alchemy was deemed to pose a real threat to those with power in the medieval world – as such, an act passed by Henry IV made the practice a felony

**13 January 1404**

## Henry IV cracks down on alchemy

*Philosophers are banned from turning base metals into gold with this nervous proclamation*

**I**n all the years of English political history, few acts of parliament look odder than the Act Against Multipliers, signed into law by Henry IV on 13 January 1404. Instead of liberating the nation's schoolchildren from the tyranny of times tables, this was actually an attempt to deal with a much more unsettling threat: the rise of alchemy.

Although the idea of alchemy – the

belief that, with the right formula, a philosopher could turn base metals into gold – now seems absurd, it was one of the foundations of what became modern chemistry. Early scientists, from the Danish astronomer Tycho Brahe to Sir Isaac Newton, were often fascinated by alchemy. To many national governments, however, it seemed a threat to the natural order. For if an alchemist

managed to make gold at will, he would not only undermine the entire economic system, he would become the most powerful man in the land.

So in early 1404, Henry IV – a man who knew a thing or two about overthrowing an established regime – decided to crack down on the alchemical threat. The Act Against Multipliers ordered that “none from hereafter should use to multiply gold or silver, or use the craft of multiplication; and if any the same do, they incur the pain of felony”. From this point onwards, prospective alchemists needed an expensive licence to pursue their experiments. Only in 1689 was the ban lifted, thanks to lobbying from one of the greatest scientists of the day – Robert Boyle, the father of modern chemistry, who was himself a keen but sadly unsuccessful alchemist.



30 January 1948

## Gandhi is assassinated on his way to prayer

*A Hindu nationalist gunman believed the leader had betrayed his people*

**T**he clock had ticked past 5pm on 30 January 1948, and in the garden at Birla House, New Delhi, Mohandas Gandhi was running late. At the age of 78, the leader of India's independence struggle still played a prominent role in the politics of the subcontinent, and had only recently completed a fast in protest at the violence between Hindus and Muslims. Now, the day's business concluded, he and his great-nieces were on their way to a prayer meeting.

Outside, a crowd of several hundred schoolchildren, businessmen, holy men and even street-sellers was waiting. As Gandhi approached, one man pushed his way to the front. "Bapu [Father] is already 10 minutes late, why do you embarrass him?" asked Gandhi's great-niece,



Indians read news of Mohandas Gandhi's assassination in 1948. The 78-year-old architect of independence was shot by a Hindu nationalist in New Delhi

Manuben. At that, the man pushed her aside, so that she dropped the rosary and notebook she was carrying. Then he levelled his Beretta pistol, and fired.

Whether Gandhi died on the spot remains controversial: some accounts say he breathed his last a few minutes later, after he had been carried inside. Either way, the shots were fatal. His assassin, who was seized immediately, turned out to be 39-year-old Nathuram

Godse, a Hindu nationalist who believed that Gandhi had betrayed his people to the Muslims. "I sat brooding intensely on the atrocities perpetrated on Hinduism, and its dark and deadly future if left to face Islam outside and Gandhi inside," he later told the court, "and... I decided all of a sudden to take the extreme step against Gandhi." Godse was executed for his actions. But to some Hindu nationalists, he remains a martyr. ■

### COMMENT / Yasmin Khan

**"In death Gandhi was able to deliver the peace between religions he had prayed for in life"**

**“**Gandhi's death occurred at a critical moment in Indian history, poised between the empire and the postcolonial state. India had passed through violent turmoil in the months of 1947 and early 1948. Some 15 million refugees had been created across the region's new borders after the new states of India and Pakistan were carved out of the old Raj. Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs had all been affected by violence and at least a million died. The question of Indian citizenship still hung in the balance.

Prior to independence, south Asia had a population that was 25 per cent Muslim.

After partition and the creation of Pakistan, Muslims still made up 10–15 per cent of the population of India, scattered throughout the subcontinent. The prime minister, Jawaharlal Nehru, spoke up loudly for a secular policy and a place for all religions in the new state. But others all across the political spectrum were not so sure. Gandhi prayed and fasted for peace, encouraging inter-ethnic harmony and for the majority population to offer safety to the minority. This enraged his assassin.

After his death on 30 January 1948, the world was stunned. In India, people were in shock. As the news spread, rioting

ceased, politicians rallied behind congress, and there was a crackdown on the extremist groups. Ironically, in death, Gandhi was able to deliver the peace between religions which he had prayed for in life. **”**



**Yasmin Khan** is an associate professor of history at the University of Oxford. Her most recent book is *The Raj at War: A People's History of India's Second World War* (Bodley Head, 2015)



# URGENT APPEAL: help Syrian refugee parents like Khitam to protect their children through the winter.



**Khitam lives with her four young children, husband Abdelsalam, and his elderly parents in a single, damp room of a half-built apartment block near Tripoli, Lebanon.**

There are holes in the walls and ceiling and they share a toilet with other refugee families crammed into the building. Khitam and Abdelsalam are mentally and physically exhausted after years of struggling to survive, unable to earn a living and fighting a daily, relentless battle to feed their children.

Right now, they are terrified by the prospect of another winter in their cold, uninsulated single room. Another winter where they will feel every blast of icy wind. Another winter where every time their children cough or sneeze they will fear they have contracted a lethal respiratory condition like pneumonia or tuberculosis.

UNHCR, the UN Refugee Agency, needs your

support to help parents protect their children this winter.

**Please will you give £75 to provide a refugee family like Khitam's with a winter survival kit to protect against the freezing weather?**

The kit contains essentials such as a heating stove, thermal blankets and a tarpaulin for insulation. It could mean survival for a family like Khitam's.

Last winter, as a result of their exposed and unsanitary living conditions, Khitam and all four of her children became ill. Baby Bilal had a high temperature and diarrhoea. Her sons Khaled (3, pictured) and Abdul Rahman (8) had chest infections and their sister Fatimah (4) contracted worms. Khitam



*"Living here, in these conditions, I cannot keep my children healthy."*

© UNHCR/Hannah Maule-finch

© UNHCR/Andrew McConnell

herself developed painful growths on her throat and lost her voice. Without access to a free healthcare system like we have in the UK, Khitam became overwhelmed with worry about how to pay for the treatment and medicines her children needed.

**"I felt helpless. My children were coughing and crying and there was nothing I could do."**

Khitam believes that

without assistance from UNHCR "my children would be dead".

Across Lebanon and Jordan, six of the last seven winters have brought heavy snowfall and temperatures regularly drop below 0°C.

1.7 million Syrian refugees are living, like Khitam's family, in unfinished or derelict buildings, or in makeshift shelters, sometimes made of little more than wood and plastic sheeting.

This coming winter, when temperatures are likely to fall below zero, the lives of the most vulnerable: young children, pregnant women and the elderly, are at grave risk from hypothermia, frostbite and diseases like pneumonia.

**With a gift of £75 you can provide a winter survival kit containing a stove, blankets, jerry can and a tarpaulin to help a family insulate and heat their home. Please give today – you could save the lives of children like Khitam's.**

**£75**

**could provide a Syrian refugee family with a winter survival kit**

Give at [unhcr.org/wintersupport](http://unhcr.org/wintersupport) or call **020 3761 9525**

**With £75, you can give a winter survival kit containing:**



**STOVE**

For heating and cooking. An absolute essential.



**TARPAULIN**

For insulation. Keeps the cold out and the warmth in.



**BLANKET**

Families left their homes with nothing. A simple blanket could save a life.



**JERRY CAN**

For storing fuel or water. Means people can avoid venturing out in the cold.

**Yes, I will help Syrian refugee families survive the winter**



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Have a story? Please email Charlotte Hodgman at [charlotte.hodgman@immediate.co.uk](mailto:charlotte.hodgman@immediate.co.uk)

## EYE OPENER

### What lies beneath

A man-made cave in Hertfordshire – thought by some to have been used as a hiding place for members of the Knights Templar from 1307, after the order's suppression – has been added to Historic England's At Risk register. Royston Cave sits just inches below street level and boasts an extensive range of mystical carvings and possible pagan symbols on its walls, including the figure shown here. Water penetration and worm activity have caused some of the carvings to deteriorate.



## MIDDLE EASTERN TRADE

*“Virtually untouched for 250 years, most of the letters were unopened and in pristine condition”*



According to Dr Esther-Miriam Wagner, the business letters of the Prize Papers offer “raw, unedited social history”



The National Archives has launched a 20-year project to study around 160,000 undelivered letters that were seized by British ships between the 17th and 19th centuries.

**Dr Esther-Miriam Wagner** (left), who is studying the project’s Arabic letters, shares what she has discovered so far

### Where have these letters come from?

Known as the Prize Papers, these letters were taken from ships captured by British vessels during naval warfare in the 17th, 18th and 19th centuries. The missives were analysed by the High Court of Admiralty to prove that wares confiscated did indeed belong to enemy merchants. They are mostly written in Dutch, Spanish and French, enemy nations of the British empire during the period, but one of the boxes in the collection contained business letters in Arabic and Hebrew script. These were seized from a Tuscan ship bound for Alexandria, in 1759. Virtually untouched for 250 years, most of the letters were unopened when I was given them, and are in the same pristine condition as when they were archived in the 18th century.

### What is significant about the letters you have studied?

The correspondence I’ve been studying consists of letters and

registers composed by Middle Eastern merchants living in Italy, and by Middle Eastern clergy in Rome, who sent their missives via their compatriot merchants to Egypt and the Levant. Very little comparative material in Arabic script from that period is known, and virtually nothing has been edited and published on the topic.

### What do the letters say?

As most of the letters were not written for an audience but meant for private consumption, we have access to raw, unedited social history. We hear one of the writers complain about his nephew’s lack of respect, which he blames on the influence of European morals. Comments are made about the inferiority of Egyptians as opposed to Syrians.

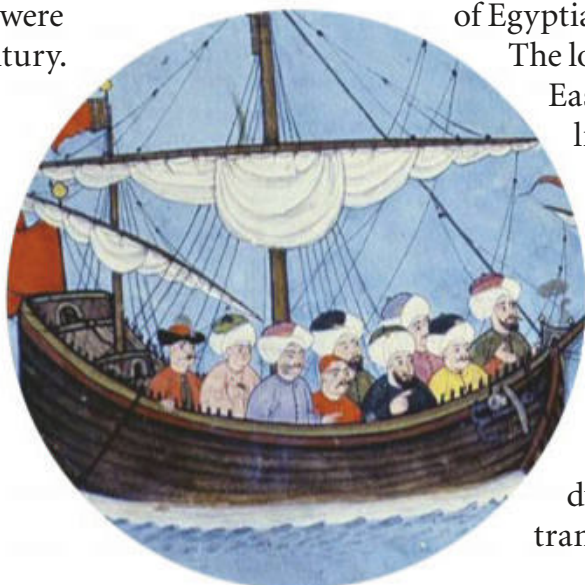
The longing for one’s Middle Eastern homeland while living in Italy, especially when family life there goes on, is also described in sorrowful tone. We read about interpersonal relationships within the mercantile and clerical networks, power dynamics, knowledge transfer, etc. Some of the

traders’ names mentioned can even be connected to mercantile families that feature prominently in other collections of letters, held elsewhere in the world.

### What can we learn about interfaith relations from the correspondence?

The letters give us an insight into Europe on the cusp of nationalist movements, before ideas of homogeneous states of one religion/one language emerged and permeated European thinking. No conflicts between members of the different Abrahamic religions are mentioned. Most of the letters are composed by Christian merchants and clergy, but they write to and about dealings with Muslim and Jewish partners. In fact, connections between Jewish and Christian merchants seem rather tight, held together by the common Middle Eastern origin. Interestingly, the Christian letter-writers use much more colloquial language among themselves, as was typical for particular social groups, but write much more formally to Muslim business partners.

**Dr Esther-Miriam Wagner** is director of research at the Woolf Institute, Cambridge. She is conducting research on the Arabic Prize Paper project with postdoctoral research fellow Dr Mohamed Ahmed. [woolf.cam.ac.uk/research](http://woolf.cam.ac.uk/research)



An Ottoman ship shown in a detail from a painting of a nautical festival held by Sultan Ahmed III





## A good month for...

### THE LEANING TOWER OF PISA

Engineering experts have stated that Pisa's leaning tower has straightened up by 4cm over the past 20 years. Prior to restoration work between 1990 and 2001, the tower's lean was 5.5 degrees – this has now reduced to 3.99 degrees.

### TREASURE HUNTERS

A metal detectorist in south Pembrokeshire has unearthed what is thought to be the first Celtic chariot burial to be uncovered in Wales. Among the items found is a Celtic horse harness dating from around 600 BC.

## A bad month for...

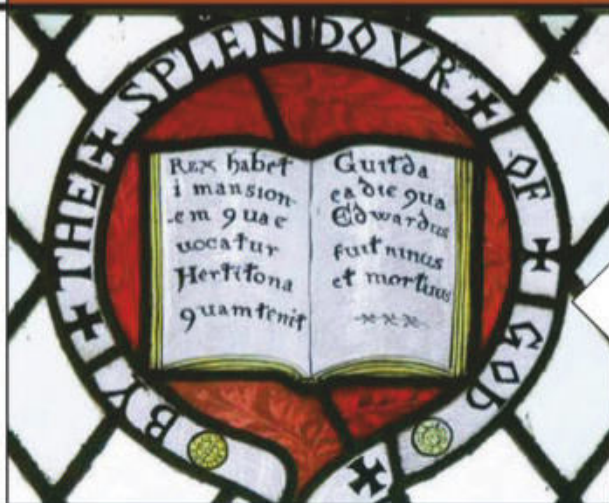


### AD 536

A team of scientists and historians have identified AD 536 as the worst year in history. That year, a huge volcanic eruption filled the atmosphere with ash, blocking out the sun. The resulting fall in temperature caused crops to fail and widespread famine.

## HISTORY NEWS ROUND-UP

A selection of the stories that have been hitting the history headlines



A stained glass window of Domesday Book in a Devon church

### Domesday Book full of fed-up people

A historian from the University of Illinois has claimed that Domesday Book – the huge survey of land probably commissioned by William the Conqueror in 1085 – is based on the accounts of Anglo-Saxon peasants who allegedly saw it as a chance to air their grievances against the Normans. Professor Carol Symes also claims that creating the public record took far longer than originally thought, with Domesday Book not produced until several years later.

### Egyptian tombs reveal cat and scarab mummies

Excavation work at a site near the King Userkaf pyramid complex in Saqqara, south of Cairo, has unearthed a collection of mummified cats and scarab beetles. The finds, which date back more than 4,000 years, were made across seven sarcophagi, three of which contained mummified cats as well as a bronze statue dedicated to a cat goddess. The discovery of mummified scarabs – often linked to the sun god Ra – is thought to be very rare.



An archaeologist cleans one of the mummified cats found in Saqqara



The recently discovered portrait of Charles Dickens, by Margaret Gillies

### Charles Dickens portrait found in South Africa

A palm-sized portrait of 19th-century author Charles Dickens has been discovered in Pietermaritzburg, South Africa. First reported missing in the late 19th century by its artist, Margaret Gillies, the portrait has remained unaccounted for ever since. The image, which was painted in 1843 when Dickens was 31, captures the author on the cusp of success – he was writing his future bestseller *A Christmas Carol* at the time the portrait was created.

### Remains of abandoned village reappear

The remains of the Derbyshire village of Derwent, which was flooded in the 1940s to make room for the Ladybower Reservoir, have re-emerged, albeit temporarily. Low waters caused by the hot and dry summer of 2018 have meant that many of the village ruins are now visible. The buildings, including the ruins of Derwent Hall, have only been seen on rare occasions since they were submerged.



The ruins of Derwent, which can be seen when the water level drops



# The historians' view...

## Why is rightwing populism on the rise in Hungary?

Viktor Orbán presents a challenge to European ideas of how democracy should be conducted. We asked two experts to explain how the Hungarian prime minister's reading of history underpins his pitch to the electorate

Compiled by **Chris Bowlby**, a BBC journalist specialising in history

**“In a famous address given in 2014, Viktor Orbán questioned the principles of liberal politics with their stress on individual rights**

**PROFESSOR MARTYN RADY**

**V**iktor Orbán has always had a shrewd sense of the power of historic symbolism. In 1988, he founded the Alliance of Young Democrats (Fidesz), one of many groups that emerged with the retreat of communism in Hungary. Through personal connections he managed to get himself on the list of speakers at the reburial in June 1989 of Imre Nagy – the former prime minister of Hungary during the revolution against Soviet rule in 1956, who was later executed for treason – and four others (plus a sixth coffin symbolising dead freedom fighters from 1956). The televised event gave Orbán a profile on which he could build.

By 2010, he had become prime minister for a second time and he began to put an

‘illiberal’ gloss on his politics. In a famous address given in 2014 he questioned the principles of liberal politics with their stress on individual rights, and argued that the proper starting point in building a society was the national community.

Orbán is a charismatic politician. He is outspoken but likeable, and quite different from the dull men and women who head up the opposition. The critical point is whether he believes the invective that he pours out on the European Union, migrants, a perceived threat to Christian civilisation, and foreign NGOs and institutions working in Hungary. He makes much of his opposition to anti-Semitism, but his campaign against George Soros, who has financed many of the NGOs that Orbán reviles, bore many of the hallmarks of traditional Hungarian anti-Semitism. The text of the new Hungarian constitution can, moreover, be read as exonerating Hungarians from complicity in the genocide of the Second World War.

Orbán taps into the undercurrents of Hungarian self-belief and resentment at lost status. Many Hungarians have still not come to terms with the 1920 Treaty of Trianon and the loss after the First World War of two-thirds of historic Hungarian territory. Those lamenting Trianon invest their passions in the ‘national community’ and are alert to the circumstances of their co-nationals across the border. Orbán conspicuously funds cultural, educational

and social activity among the diaspora. Indeed, his ‘illiberalism’ speech was delivered at a summer camp in Băile Tușnad, in the heartland of the Hungarian community in Romania.

Memory of Trianon is linked to the mythology of the bulwark – that Hungarians over centuries defended Europe against the Ottoman Turks. The truth is more complicated. Heroes’ Square in Budapest commemorates 14 champions of Hungarian history, from Saint Stephen, Hungary’s first Christian king, to Louis Kossuth, leader of the 1848–49 War of Independence against the Habsburgs. Among these, Stephen Bocskai held the title of prince of Hungary by the gift of the sultan, while Imre Thököly fought in 1683 at the siege of Vienna on the Turkish side.

Even so, the conviction remains among many Hungarians that they played a unique role in securing Christian civilisation. Orbán has built on this in his anti-migrant and anti-Muslim rhetoric, even likening himself to a 16th-century captain, holding the frontier against the same Islamic challenge. It seems he must keep pressing the

right buttons, tapping into atavistic Hungarian self-beliefs, to stay in power.



**Martyn Rady** is a professor in central European history at UCL



**Heroes' Square in Budapest commemorates famous figures from Hungarian history. Yet their stories are more nuanced than nationalists typically acknowledge, says Martyn Rady**





Hungary's prime minister Viktor Orbán is charismatic, but many of his ideas are at odds with the European political mainstream



An armed street fighter during the Hungarian revolution of 1956, an event that has shaped the way the modern nation sees itself

## “The communist takeover in 1947 had a devastating effect on the research and teaching of Hungarian history

**PROFESSOR BELA BODO**

**H**istory has always been an intense battleground in Hungarian politics. Since the early 19th century, Hungarian history has been a nationalist enterprise. With some exaggeration, one can say that it was historians who invented the nation.

In the interwar years, the mission of Hungarian historians was to justify the eventual restoration of the country's historical borders and strengthen its national identity. After the war, the 1947 communist takeover had a devastating impact on the research and teaching of Hungarian history. The new political elite closed down research institutions, and cleansed the universities of conservative and liberal scholars. It replaced historians and respected teachers with party hacks and fanatics. The task of this new type

of professor was indoctrination. Modern intellectual and social history had no place in a world that denied the power of ideas.

Yet Hungary remained a nation state even under communism, and Marxist historians continued to view the nation as an active force, indeed the main agent, of history. Unlike 'bourgeois' historians before 1945, they identified the nation with the 'people' and the working class. However, any historical perspective that threatened the party's dominant position, the security of the new regime and its relations with the Soviet Union became forbidden. Taboo subjects included positive aspects of Habsburg rule, the Treaty of Trianon, Hungarian participation in the Jewish genocide and, of course, the 1956 revolution.

In the 1980s, however, old taboos were first challenged and, in the final phase of the regime and the aftermath of its collapse, rejected. New research was possible. The history of the 1956 revolution, the founding myth of the new state, came to occupy a central position in collective memory. And the Treaty of Trianon found its historians too. Historical research now functioned as a force of integration, into Europe and the EU.

Tensions with western historians remained, however, especially regarding the importance of nation states, national identity and the role of anti-communism in modern history. And the current government under Viktor Orbán subscribes

to a traditional conservative interpretation of modern Hungarian history. The problem is that the conservative tradition after 1919 became tainted by radical ideologies, as conservative politicians collaborated with right radical movements and parties.

Today's government keeps its distance from openly fascist myths and cults. On the other hand, in an attempt to integrate the radical right into one large camp, it tolerates and even supports the cult of radical anti-Semites of the interwar period such as the novelist Dezső Szabó, writer Cécile Tormay and Bishop Ottokár Prohászka. The regime might not forbid publications on topics it deems controversial. Yet by starving of funds research institutes that favour a different perspective, while creating new institutes and museums and lavishing them with money, it sets trends. **H**



**Bela Bodo** is professor of Hungarian history at the University of Bonn

### DISCOVER MORE

#### BOOKS

- **The Will to Survive: A History of Hungary** by Bryan Cartledge (Hurst, 2011)
- **Orban: Europe's Strong Man** by Paul Lendvai (Hurst, 2017)



**PAST NOTES**

## NEW YEAR'S RESOLUTIONS

**OLD NEWS***Warwick Castle  
haunted by  
ghostly footsteps***Warwick and  
Warwickshire Advertiser**  
**18 January 1952**

**A**lthough ghostly castles are well known today, back in 1952 Warwick Castle's local newspaper published a surprising exposé. It was a secret carried by generations of odd-job handy men, maids and even the earls themselves: Warwick Castle was haunted. Revealing the story in a talk to local townswomen, Mr PW Hollyoak, agent to the Castle Estates for more than 50 years, shared his experiences of ghostly footsteps pacing along the corridors of the castle.

"Mr Hollyoak said that for several generations the measured tread of footsteps had been heard occasionally in a corridor ending near the chapel at the castle," the newspaper reported. Hollyoak had heard the footsteps himself, and 70 years ago, in the 1880s, the present earl's great uncle and his agent had sat up for three weeks, watching through the night to try to solve the mystery. Frances, aka 'Daisy', the Countess of Warwick (1861–1938) and mistress to the Prince of Wales, also heard the footsteps. She had employed a paranormal investigator but no explanation for the ghostly pacing was ever found. You might even still hear it today, if you listen hard enough.

News story sourced from [britishnews-paperarchive.co.uk](http://britishnews-paperarchive.co.uk) and rediscovered by **Fern Riddell**.

Fern regularly appears on BBC Radio 3's *Free Thinking*

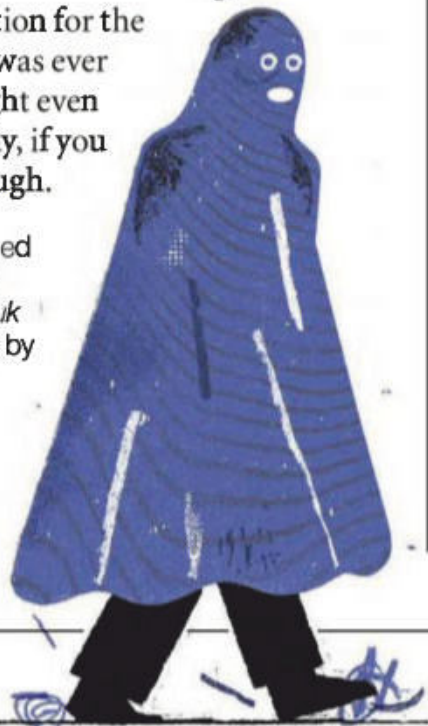


ILLUSTRATION BY BEN JONES



The clock strikes midnight in this Happy New Year postcard from c1910

**Julian Humphrys** looks at the origins of those annual promises that many of us fail to keep

**When were new year's resolutions first made?**

At least 4,000 years ago, it seems. During the festival that marked the start of their new year (which began with the planting of their crops in March), Babylonians would seek to keep on the right side of their gods by promising to return things that they'd borrowed. A similar practice took place in Rome following Caesar's reorganisation of the calendar. Romans would make sacrifices to Janus – the two-faced god who looked back to the past and forward to the future – together with promises of good conduct in the coming year.

**How did resolutions become linked with self-improvement?**

This, too, was initially religious in inspiration. The 17th-century adventurer and religious writer Lady Anne Halkett wrote in her diary for 2 January 1671 a series of vows under the heading 'resolutions'. In the 1720s the leading New England theologian Jonathan Edwards had compiled no fewer than 70 resolutions, including promises to live soberly, refrain from overeating and

to waste no time. In 1740 John Wesley, the founder of Methodism, wanted a spiritual alternative to the boozy carousing that even then characterised many people's new year celebrations. He created the covenant renewal service, a mixture of hymns, prayers and promises, which was normally held on New Year's Eve or New Year's Day.

**When did they become secular?**

Certainly by the early 19th century, by which time the custom was established enough to be satirised. In 1802, *Walker's Hibernian Magazine* in Dublin published spoof resolutions including "physicians have resolved to be more moderate in their fees", and one in which politicians had pledged to "have no other object in view than the good of their country".

**When was the actual term 'new year's resolution' first used?**

Its first known use was in a rather mischievous article in a Boston newspaper of 1 January 1813. This suggested that, in preparation for their improved lives in January, people had been racking up the sins in December. **H**





## Michael Wood on... **upcoming anniversaries**

# “This was a critical moment in revealing the horror of the Raj”

“Historical anniversaries, as we have often remarked in these pages, are thought-provoking affairs that invite us to look at ourselves – at who we are and where we have come from: the meaning of history. In the era of fake news, good history is even more important for our understanding of the world around us. This year, I’m especially hoping to learn more about three centenaries of events that came about in the fallout from the First World War: in Russia, India and China.

Five years of First World War commemorations ended in November 2018 with moving ceremonies and Peter Jackson’s extraordinary film *They Shall Not Grow Old*. However, the 1918 ceasefire and armistice (a formal end to hostilities was not achieved until June 1919) did not mark the end of conflict across the globe. Far from it.

The year 1919 was particularly fascinating. For how many of us know that after the war was over, the British were then drawn into the Russian Civil War to support the White Russians against the Bolsheviks? They fought in northern Russia, the Baltic, the Black Sea and the Caucasus, even besieging what later became Stalingrad with tanks from the western front. Many hundreds of British soldiers were killed; most of them are still buried in Russia. This British war has almost been airbrushed from history, but the centenary is a great opportunity to discover more about this overlooked event.

My second centenary is the Amritsar massacre of 13 April 1919, when British troops in India killed hundreds of people demonstrating against colonial repression. This was a critical moment in revealing the nature of the British Raj. More than 1 million Indian troops had served in the First World War, of whom 75,000 died. The survivors were already deeply disillusioned with their appallingly racist treatment by the British during the war (as revealed in astounding archive interviews with Indian veterans that were recently given to the British Library). The sheer brutality of Amritsar stunned the Indian people: it was the moment the scales

fell from their eyes about the ‘goodwill’ of the British.

My third 1919 centenary is May the 4th, the great protest in Beijing’s Tiananmen Square. Again, this was part of the fallout from the Great War. Around 180,000 Chinese labourers had worked on the western front, of whom at least 5,000 died. But at the Treaty of Versailles, our Chinese allies were betrayed. German colonies in China were not handed back to them, but given to Japan. The fury this sparked was channelled into the 4 May demonstration. This in turn inspired national protests and spurred on the New Culture Movement, which challenged the country’s cultural underpinning. Understanding modern China is one of the pressing issues of our time; the New Culture Movement is a good place to begin.

Finally, after my trio of 1919 stories, let’s not forget the bicentenary of the Peterloo Massacre, which has recently been highlighted by Mike Leigh’s blistering film. There’s still a danger we take Peterloo for granted, but with more and more material coming to light – eye witness accounts, ballads and poetry – it’s a great time to remember its seismic effect in our public culture. In the north-west, it is still part of family tradition: my father’s distant relatives were in the contingent who went to St Peter’s Fields with the legendary reformist Sam Bamford, ‘our Sam’; and I well remember the stories about the local Peterloo veterans, some of whom were still fighting for the vote more than 60 years later.

Peterloo events are planned all over the North West next summer, and I hope that the BBC will broadcast something of substance about this major event in our popular history. The rights we have today were not gained by the ruling class magnanimously giving up their privileges, but by the striving of ordinary men and women, and Peterloo marks a great symbolic moment in that story.

So another great year of history lies ahead, which I look forward to seeing reflected in these pages. A happy new year to all our readers! **H**

### Michael Wood

is professor of public history at the University of Manchester. He has presented numerous BBC series, and his books include *The Story of England* (Viking, 2010)



ILLUSTRATION BY FEMKE DE JONG



# LETTERS

## Land of the free

I write regarding your article on Abraham Lincoln (*Lincoln and Slavery*, November). I am an avid reader of your magazine – I have English ancestors who settled in America – but I take exception to the idea America has poor tools for nation-building.

We *do* have centuries of history, plus we have natural borders in our oceans, the Great Lakes and Saint Lawrence and Rio Grand rivers, and our constitution dates back to 1787! We didn't have a "powerful monarchy" to force us together, but rather the common love of rights. I think that our laws are stronger than within a monarchy.

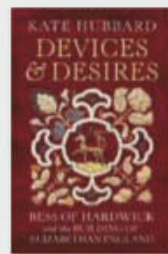
Other countries have modelled their constitutions after our constitution, which allows for democratic updates to reflect cultural evolution. In England, it wasn't until 1689 that the king or queen could no longer change laws, borrow or tax without parliament's approval. It wasn't until the

Great Reform Act (1832) that industrial towns and the urban middle classes had their voices heard in the Commons, and many men could not even vote until 1918. It also took until after the First World War for women to obtain the vote in both countries, so apparently the British system didn't speed up women's rights either.

I will take a powerful, imperfect democracy over a formerly powerful monarchy any day.

**Peter Shawaker, Ohio**

● We reward the Letter of the Month writer with our book of the month. In this issue that is *Devices and Desires: Bess of Hardwick and the Building of Elizabethan England* by Kate Hubbard. See page 71



to fascism. Nazi and fascist movements became marginal phenomena: 2 per cent of the vote in Norway, 0.8 per cent in Sweden. Only in Finland was fascism a threat (the IKL party got 8 per cent in 1938). To say that social democracy was authoritarian is simply not true.

**Bernt Hagtvet, professor emeritus of political science, University of Oslo, Norway**

## What if?...

With the 100th anniversary of the armistice of the First World War, it is timely to consider whether the war was worth the gain for Britain and its empire. More than a million British and imperial soldiers died, and a million and a half were seriously injured.

Suppose Britain had not gone to war: these lives and injuries would have been spared. It is likely Germany and its allies would have been the final victors. The course of the Russian revolution would have been altered, Hitler would not have come to power, and there may not have been a Second World War. France would have lost territory, as it did 50 years earlier in the Franco-Prussian War, including some of its empire. Note, though, that the occupation in that war was short. Of course, it is impossible to lay out what other course history might have taken, but the First World War was certainly not 'the war to end war'.

**Derek Smith, Forest Gate**

## A man of his time

I enjoyed reading Lucy Worsley's article about Abraham Lincoln and even learned from it. I did not know the sad story of Jefferson C Davis and Ebenezer Creek, surely a war crime. However, I must write in defence of Lincoln, who was a man of his time, believing in the myth of race that still deceives so many people today. He saw that what had been done to African-Americans was criminal, and he believed sending them 'back' might atone for it, not realising that they were as American as he was.

His great concern was the preservation of the union, for which he was willing to give all (and indeed he did give all, including his son, his wife's sanity and his own life). And he did it with courage, grace and humour, to ensure that, to quote the Gettysburg address: "This nation, under God, shall have a new birth of freedom – and that government of the people, by the people, for the people, shall not perish from the earth."

**Mary Karen Solomon, Colorado**

## Misremembered history

It may seem a trivial matter, but perhaps a history magazine should

not be perpetuating popular myths.

I refer to *Social Media* on page 19 of the Christmas edition and the statement: "If not for her [Marie Curie's] work we wouldn't have X-rays, etc."

Marie Curie did not discover X-rays. While she did build and operate mobile X-ray units in the First World War, the techniques were already well established. Why this idea, that Marie Curie brought us X-rays perpetuates, is beyond me. She should be remembered for her fantastic researches into radioactivity instead.

**Jim McKnight, Altrincham**

## Northern compromise

In his *Was it Worth it?* (November) Professor Richard Evans writes that Scandinavia fell to an authoritarian form of social democracy. It is unclear what he means by this. In all the three Scandinavian countries, and in Finland in 1938, there was compromise that saved parliamentary democracy.

The labour movements, having discarded Leninism and revolutionary romanticism, formed an alliance with the farmers' unions, which provided the basis for democratic government. This closed the political space available

A US flag is raised near Paris, 1918. The outcome of the First World War continues to be debated



BRIDGEMAN





Paul Robeson pictured at a Kremlin youth ball in 1959. Reader Leonard H Cizewski believes that the singer was “morally and ethically blind to reality”

### Misquote irritation

Christine Johnston is not alone (*Letters*, Christmas). The title misquote on Peter Jackson’s otherwise fine production *They Shall Not Grow Old* stood out like a sweaty thumbprint on the Mona Lisa. It makes no difference whether the mistake was deliberate or accidental. The producers should apologise forthwith and with appropriate humility.  
**Hugh Rogers**, Lincolnshire

### A sin of omission?

Unlike Frances O’Grady, I cannot find that Paul Robeson ever “acknowledged the truth about Stalin” (*My History Hero*, November). What I have found is that after Khrushchev’s 1956 speech denouncing some of Stalin’s crimes, Robeson went silent about Stalin while continuing to support the Soviet Union, even though the country continued to commit many similar crimes to those of the Stalin era. Going silent is far from “acknowledging the truth about Stalin”.

Paul Robeson seemed to have been morally and ethically blind to reality. He believed in, supported and advocated an ideology that, in its implementation in the Soviet Union, equalled the Nazis in its crimes against humanity. He was also able to reconcile himself to the two-year Soviet military alliance with the worst white supremacists in history. During and because of that alliance, the Nazis were able to capture most of the

victims of the Holocaust, place them beyond the reach of military rescue and begin to exterminate them.

I find little to admire in people who saw the Stalinist form of communism as a path to human freedom and liberation. At best, the legacy of people such as Paul Robeson is profoundly tragic.

**Leonard H Cizewski**, Wisconsin

### Corrections

● In the Christmas issue’s *News* pages we described a potential new date for the eruption of Vesuvius in AD 79 as being “two months earlier than previously thought”. In fact, as reader Hugh Hollinghurst points out, it is actually two months *later* than the traditional date of 24 August.

● The map included in the article *From Traders to Invaders* (Christmas) included both Londinium and Corinium in England. As reader Caroline Elliott has noted, these names did not exist prior to the Roman conquest of Britain in AD 43 and should not have featured on the map.

### WRITE TO US

We welcome your letters, while reserving the right to edit them. We may publish your letters on our website. Please include a daytime phone number and, if emailing, a postal address (not for publication). Letters should be no longer than 250 words.

**email:** letters@historyextra.com

**Post:** Letters, *BBC History Magazine*, Immediate Media Company Bristol Ltd, Tower House, Fairfax Street, Bristol BS1 3BN

## SOCIAL MEDIA

What you’ve been saying on Twitter and Facebook



### Historically inaccurate but still good fun: what’s your ‘guilty pleasure’ historical film or television series?

**@ZoeWelch1** *The Tudors*. So inaccurate and too many pretty people, but really puts women to the forefront despite Henry being the face. It makes you sympathise with each wife and daughter for what they suffered. Also, the best Anne Boleyn portrayal I’ve seen so far.

**@holmeandaway** I’ve been watching *Medici: Masters of Florence* on Netflix. Completely inaccurate but lots of fun! I think it’s a good way of getting people interested in the period.

**@TomK\_1234** Despite being English, *Braveheart*. As a kid I loved it. As an adult I love pointing out the mistakes. Battle of Stirling BRIDGE!

**@TrainTraveller5** No-one’s mentioned *Blackadder*. Utterly inaccurate but hilarious and an ending that still has an impact.

**@finnellaoleary** *Outlander* has an amazing plotline and costumes, even if some of it is inaccurate (as you’d expect for a series about time travel!). Claire Beauchamp Fraser is one of the best female protagonists on television at the moment.

**@Calluna\_Vulga** *Robin of Sherwood*, the Michael Praed series. The number of people on my medieval archaeology degree course with this as their route in was unreal!

**@SarahAB94** It has to be *The White Queen*. In terms of accuracy, it was useless but the *drama*.

**@gothicheart81** *The Eagle* (2011). The legend of the loss of the Ninth Legion is deeply inaccurate, but I adore the use of Scotland, and the cinematography gives a good feel for what Iron Age Scotland must have felt like to the Romans (even if the tribes are a bit dubious).

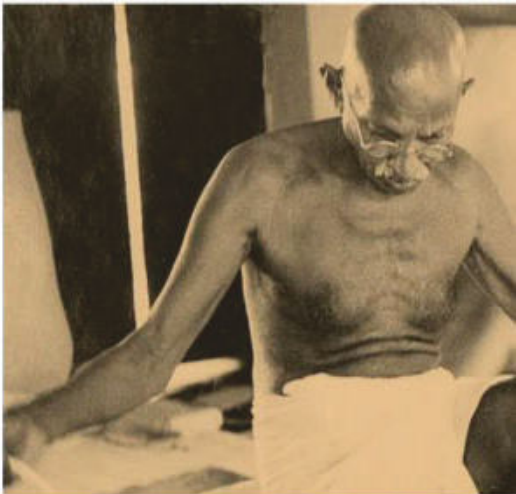
**@PinkJellyArts** *Gladiator* brings me to tears at the end every time, despite knowing you can see a gas canister on a chariot at one point.

**@DaveCJLP** Sky’s series *Britannia*. From Donovan’s opening music to Mackenzie Crook’s archdruid, this is so bonkers it’s sublime.





**THE**



**GAME**







GETTY IMAGES/TOPEFOTO/ALAMY/LIBRARY OF CONGRESS/SHUTTERSTOCK

The Great Man theory of history has come under fire over recent decades. Nevertheless, argues **Piers Brendon**, the extraordinary contributions of some extraordinary people to 20th-century history suggest that it is often individuals, not just great impersonal forces, that shape the ages

Complements a new BBC Two series, *Icons: The Story of the 20th Century*



LEFT, FROM TOP: **Winston Churchill, Mohandas Gandhi, Mao Zedong, Franklin D Roosevelt and Margaret Thatcher** all had a profound influence on 20th-century history

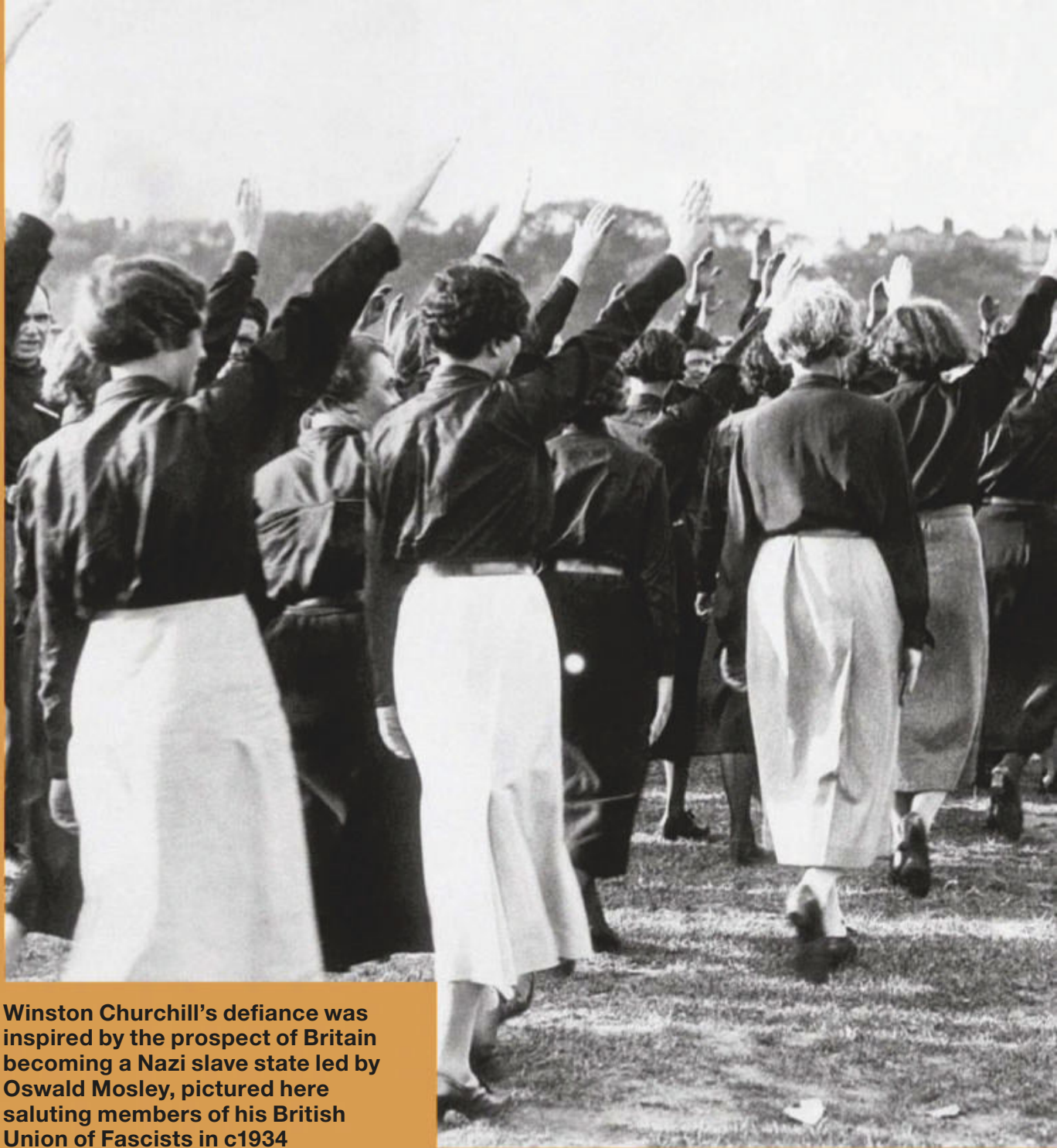
# CHANGERS



One of the highest profile historical dramas of recent times was Joe Wright's *Darkest Hour*. The film conjures up vividly the most crucial achievement of any

20th-century British leader: Winston Churchill's insistence on continuing the war against Hitler and the Nazis even if the Dunkirk evacuation, as seemed likely at the time, should prove to be a disaster. The film, to be sure, is drama rather than history, but Gary Oldman, who won an Oscar for his performance, vigorously conveys Churchill's bulldog determination in the face of adversity at home as well as abroad. Without a secure parliamentary base, the new prime minister had to use all his eloquence, energy and courage to prevent the champions of appeasement in his five-man war cabinet, Neville Chamberlain and Lord Halifax, from seeking a negotiated settlement with Germany. On 28 May 1940, he rallied the entire cabinet, some 25 ministers assembled in his room in the House of Commons, to the cause of resistance.

If Britain made peace, Churchill said, it would become a slave state. It would be disarmed and ruled by a Nazi puppet such as Oswald Mosley. So the fight must go on. "If this long island story of ours is to end at last, let it end only when each one of us lies choking in his own blood upon the ground." His colleagues responded with shouts of approval, jumping up and patting him on the back. They were probably expressing the essential sentiments of the British people, as Churchill himself famously claimed in the second volume of his history of the war, *Their Finest Hour*: "There was a white glow, overpowering, sublime, which ran through our island from end to end." Yet had Churchill not been at the helm, embodying the national will and giving the lion's roar, there was a real chance that terms might have been agreed to allow Hitler's Germany to dominate Europe. Churchill's intervention occurred at a critical moment in the nation's story – and it occupies a unique place in the national consciousness, as the success of *Darkest Hour*, a film released 77 years after the events it portrays, proves.



Winston Churchill's defiance was inspired by the prospect of Britain becoming a Nazi slave state led by Oswald Mosley, pictured here saluting members of his British Union of Fascists in c1934

**It is impossible to understand the 20th century without giving due weight to the parts played by major figures**

Pressure from one strong leader turned the hinge of fate. Despite the spread of democracy, comparable events occurred quite often in the last century; and it is salutary to look back on them from the age of Donald Trump, whose capacity to upset the global order is not limited by normal political inhibitions. This is not to deny that deep impersonal forces – climate, geography, demography, economic evolution and so on – play a fundamental role in determining the course of history. Nor is it to suggest that individuals, among them Churchill himself, can be seen apart from the conditions in which they were formed and under which they operated. Individuals, however, are not mere creatures of their *zeitgeist*. They are not bubbles afloat on the ocean of time, at the mercy of wind and tide, unable to direct their own course. To represent them as such is to ignore the force of human agency as well as the sway of "master spirits" imbued with what Friedrich Nietzsche called "the will to power".

### **Foreshadowing of fascism**

Of course, the ideal of the Nietzschean superman, the *übermensch* who dominates the masses and becomes the incarnation of the nation, is now exploded. The heroic interpretation of the past, best expressed by

GETTY IMAGES





**Margaret Thatcher at the Falklands War victory parade, London, 1982. The prime minister's "fierce patriotism inflated ideas of national exceptionalism", writes Piers Brendon**

the Scottish essayist, historian and philosopher Thomas Carlyle (1795–1881), is dead. Carlyle maintained that Great Men (his capitals) were the “modellers, patterns, and in a wide sense creators of whatsoever the general mass of men contrived to do or to attain”. They were “the soul of the whole world’s history”. This notion, put forward in Carlyle’s oracular lectures, *On Heroes and Hero-Worship*, is rightly seen as elitist, sexist and racist, a sinister foreshadowing of fascism.

History today, by contrast, embraces social, gender, ethnic and other studies, and the whole subject is vastly enriched by being examined from the bottom up rather than the top down. Yet, for all that, it is impossible to understand the history of the 20th century without giving due weight to the parts played by remarkable personalities – figures like Adolf Hitler, Josef Stalin, Nelson Mandela and Martin Luther King. Without their unique contributions to the past century, the world we live in today would look very different indeed. A few examples of extraordinary people having an extraordinary impact on the world around them suffice to make the case – and few people would have a greater impact than Vladimir Ilyich Lenin.

As war-torn Russia descended into chaos in 1917, the professional revolutionary Lenin

returned home from Swiss exile, crossing Germany in the famous ‘sealed train’ as though, said Winston Churchill, he were a plague bacillus. On 16 April, Bolsheviks gave Lenin a rapturous welcome at St Petersburg’s Finland station. Far from basking in its glow, he rebuked them for compromising with the provisional government. Eyes blazing with messianic fervour, he demanded blood-red revolution. The foreign war must give way to the class war. The bourgeoisie must be smashed. Land must go to the peasants and all power to the soviets (workers’ councils). A dictatorship of the proletariat in Russia would be a prelude to the overthrow of the international capitalist order. Thanks to his demonic personality and the skill with which he rode the Russian maelstrom, Lenin accomplished much of this programme. Communism, whether in the shape of state power or subversive ideology, thus became a salient factor in 20th-century history.

### **Hail the deliverer**

On 6 April 1930, a slight, bald, toothless man strode across the mud flats near the fishing village of Dandi (in western India) to the Arabian Sea and picked up a handful of natural salt. He was Mohandas Gandhi and, as a huge crowd looked on, one of his

followers, the poet Sarojini Naidu, exclaimed: “Hail, Deliverer!”

This was the culmination of Gandhi’s 240-mile Salt March from Ahmedabad, an act of brilliantly calculated defiance against the British Raj. The authorities had imposed a tax on salt, which Gandhi called “the only condiment of the poor”. By freely availing himself of this gift of God, the Mahatma (‘Great Soul’) crystallised Indian opposition to alien rule and set an inspiring example of the efficacy of *satyagraha* or ‘soul force’. As the nationalist leader Gokhale said, Gandhi was “capable of turning heroes out of clay”.

Actually, passive resistance often led to active resistance and disturbances across the subcontinent resulted in more than 60,000 arrests, including that of Gandhi himself. But the apostle of non-violence pursued his course unflinchingly towards the goal of Indian independence. With his dhoti and his spinning-wheel, symbol of the dignity of labour, the Mahatma struck sophisticated compatriots, including his ally Jawaharlal Nehru (the first prime minister of India), as an anachronism. But this was part of his appeal. Gandhi was, as he himself said, “spinning the destiny of India”. And it wasn’t just India that was transformed. The destiny of other countries shaking off the imperial

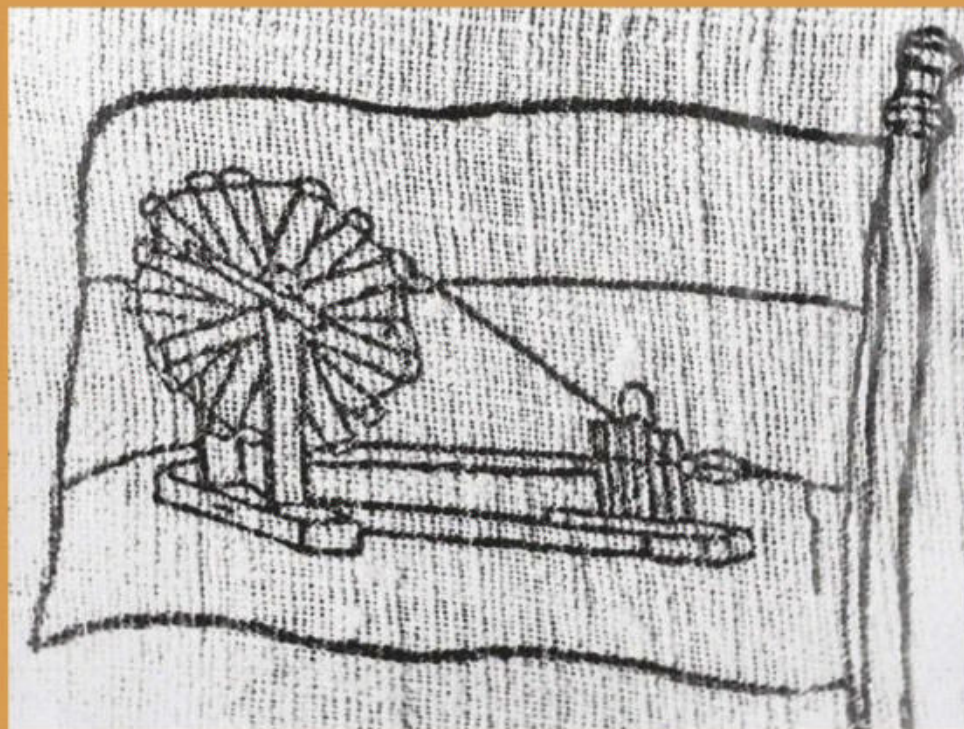




Charismatic and self-assured, President Franklin D. Roosevelt throws the first pitch at a World Series baseball game in 1933



LEFT: A 1960s poster shows Mao Zedong surrounded by what he regarded as China's greatest asset: the workers  
BELOW: A detail from a piece of home-spun khadi cloth, which Gandhi urged his followers to wear



yoke was woven from the thread he made.

As Gandhi set off on his salt march, one of the world's major powers was staring into the economic abyss. According to John Maynard Keynes, the slump of 1929 and resulting Great Depression threatened to plunge the United States into a new dark age that might last for a thousand years. The influential journalist Edmund Wilson likened the economic crisis to "the rending of the Earth in preparation for the Day of Judgment". By 1933, 15 million Americans were out of work, industrial production had halved and hundreds of banks were failing. But on 4 March new hope dawned. In Washington, Franklin D. Roosevelt, whose charismatic personality transcended his physical disability, was inaugurated as president. Roosevelt glowed with self-assurance as though, said actor Lillian Gish, he had been "dipped in phosphorus".

"The only thing we have to fear is fear itself", Roosevelt pronounced, promising to make war against the emergency as though the country had been invaded by a foreign foe. His New Deal was by no means completely successful. But Roosevelt's great achievement was to restore the confidence of a traumatised nation. He was thus able to win three more elections; to lead the US to victory in the Second World War; and, as a result of huge

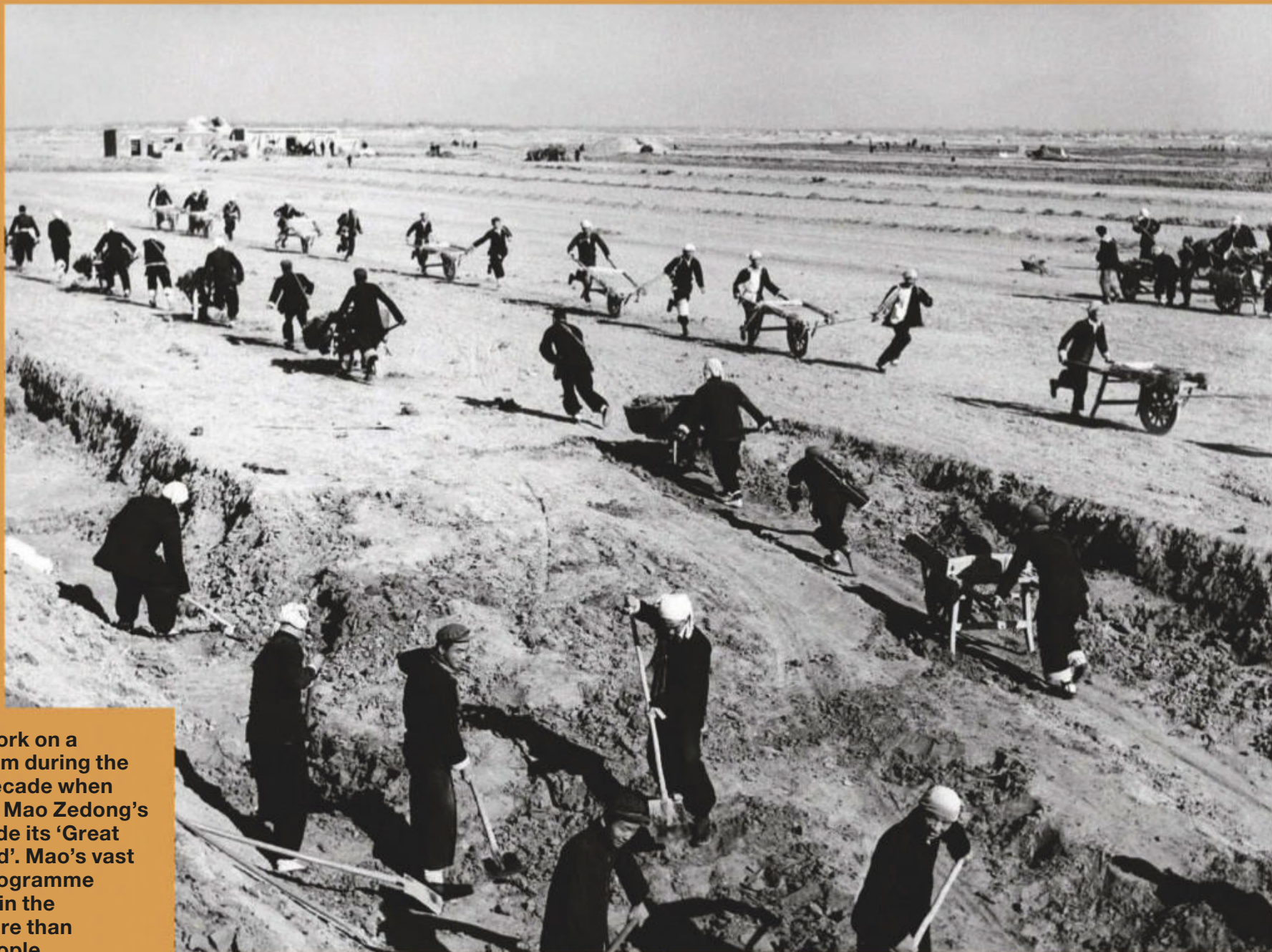
**Roosevelt glowed with self-assurance as though, said the actor Lillian Gish, he had been "dipped in phosphorus"**

state investment, to end the Depression.

Roosevelt was undoubtedly a titan of modern history. But his impact on the course of the 20th century was arguably eclipsed by that of Mao Zedong. In May 1958, Mao, chairman of the Chinese Communist Party, inaugurated the Great Leap Forward, and the shockwaves from that policy are still being felt today. Having emerged triumphant from the country's civil and foreign war, forged the People's Republic into a totalitarian monolith and begun to transform the economy and society along socialist lines, Mao had long put his faith in the revolutionary potential of the nation's supreme asset, its huge population. The peasantry was an irresistible force, he believed, "like a tornado or tempest".

The Great Helmsman now harnessed this energy, employing coercion on a gigantic scale, in an effort to modernise China and overtake the capitalist west. Peasants were stripped of their private plots and herded into communes. Collective farms were forced to produce grain for the state at fixed prices, and an enormous programme of industrialisation was initiated. This involved attempting to manufacture steel in millions of village furnaces, which resulted in deforestation, the production of useless lumps of metal, the neglect of crops and the worst manmade





Labourers work on a collective farm during the 1950s, the decade when China, under Mao Zedong's iron rule, made its 'Great Leap Forward'. Mao's vast economic programme would result in the deaths of more than 20 million people

famine in history. More than 20 million people perished. Yet like Stalin during the 1932–33 Ukraine famine, Mao continued to export grain, thus partially concealing the catastrophe from the rest of the world.

According to Jung Chang and Jon Halliday, whose biography presents Mao in satanic terms, he said that corpses helped to “fertilise the ground”. During the Cultural Revolution of the 1960s–70s, he augmented their number, further rooting the red dictatorship in blood. Yet it was Mao's unique achievement to sow the seed of the present superpower.

### The Iron Lady's triumph

On 12 October 1982, Margaret Thatcher, wearing an outfit reminiscent of a senior service uniform (navy blue suit, white gloves and broad-brimmed white hat with blue ribbon), took the salute at a Falklands War victory parade in the City of London. The 300,000-strong crowd sang ‘Rule, Britannia!’ and Thatcher finished her Guildhall speech with the mantra that the British people were “proud to be British”.

The nation's first female prime minister was criticised for excluding members of the royal family from this patriotic celebration and for vaingloriously referring to “my troops” rather than those of Her Majesty the Queen. But the

Iron Lady's resolute response to the Argentine invasion seemed to justify her claim to be making Britain great again – as it had been, she said, when it “built an empire and ruled a quarter of the world”.

Thatcher's martial triumph also appeared to vindicate her other tough policies: the privatisation of state enterprises, the selling of council houses, the emasculation of trade unions, financial deregulation and alienation from the European Community. Following the Soviet Union's collapse in 1991, Thatcher went as far as to assert that, just as Winston Churchill and Franklin D Roosevelt had destroyed fascism, she and Ronald Reagan had destroyed communism. This may be an illusion, as are many of the claims made for the so-called Thatcher Revolution, but there's little doubt that the prime minister's fierce patriotism *did* inflate ideas of national exceptionalism – ideas that are still having consequences today.

Thanks to Thatcher's achievements – not to mention those of Cleopatra, Boudicca, Joan of Arc, Elizabeth I and Catherine the Great – Thomas Carlyle was doubly wrong in asserting that universal history was the biography of Great Men. Where he was right, though, was in focussing on the particular. It was to this that Aristotle was referring when he said

that history is, for example, “what [the leading Athenian statesman] Alcibiades did and suffered”. Individuals are no more symptoms of their time than events are incidental to history. By definition, outstanding men and women accomplish more than others. The measure of their significance is that they do not leave the world as they found it. **H**

**Piers Brendon** is a former keeper of the Churchill Archives Centre and a fellow of Churchill College, Cambridge. His latest book is *Churchill's Bestiary: His Life Through Animals*, recently published by Michael O'Mara Books

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#### TV

► The eight-part series **Icons: The Story of the 20th Century** begins on BBC Two this month



#### EVENT

► Piers Brendon will be discussing **Edward VIII** at our Kings and Queens weekend event in Oxford on 2–3 March. For more details turn to page 58

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## Finding Elusive Ancestors

You can search the census in a variety of ways on TheGenealogist, selecting to either look for a person,

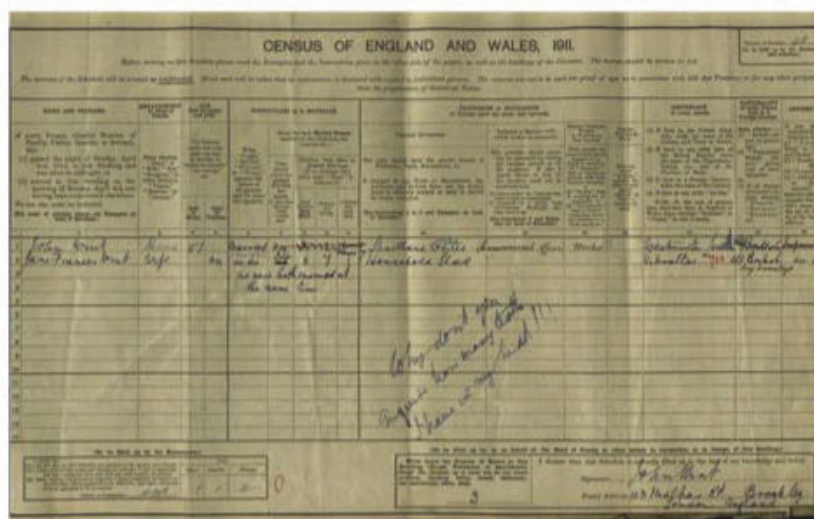
a family group or an address on the Master Search. This wide range of options can identify elusive ancestors and those with common surnames. The person search has a keyword box for any words that you would expect to see, like occupation, place of birth or address.

Ancestors' names don't always appear in the records as we might expect. As well as using wildcards and playing around with the phonetic and standard surname filters to look for variant spellings, you can leave the name boxes blank, entering just a keyword, year of birth and selecting a county – particularly useful for identifying name variations.

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Parish records take us back beyond 1837 when civil registration began, but if your relatives don't appear in the Anglican church registers, perhaps they belonged to a Non-Conformist congregation. Registers of ceremonies performed by Presbyterian, Congregationalist, Baptist, Quaker, Methodist, Unitarian and other dissenting ministers can be searched right back to the mid-1600s on TheGenealogist. Alongside these, you have access to electoral records, directories, school and college registers and a wealth of military collections.



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A 1646 engraving of John Lilburne behind bars. The outspoken critic of successive governments spent half his adult life imprisoned or in exile

# *The rebel they couldn't gag*

John Lilburne was whipped, pilloried, imprisoned and exiled, yet still the authorities couldn't silence him.

**Mike Braddick** charts one man's extraordinary fight for the rights of the freeborn Englishman in the 17th century

Complements the 10-part BBC Radio 4 series *The Battles That Won Our Freedoms*





**D**ragged from bed at 6am on 11 June 1646, John Lilburne was taken by armed men to the House of Lords. That day, and twice more in June and July, he refused to hear the charge against him

because the Lords were, he declared, not his peers – to acknowledge their right to charge him would be to surrender all the freedoms guaranteed in Magna Carta. Lilburne went further, saying the Lords wanted “to tread [Magna Carta] under their feet”, and that he was determined to resist them “to the last drop of my blood”. To make his point, he refused to kneel or to remove his hat in the house, and while the charge was being read he ostentatiously put his fingers in his ears. He could tell the man had finished, he later claimed, only because he could see that his lips had stopped moving.

If any incident captures the essence of John Lilburne, then his performance in the House of Lords is surely it. His gift for political theatre and the finely calibrated insult made him a truly formidable political campaigner.

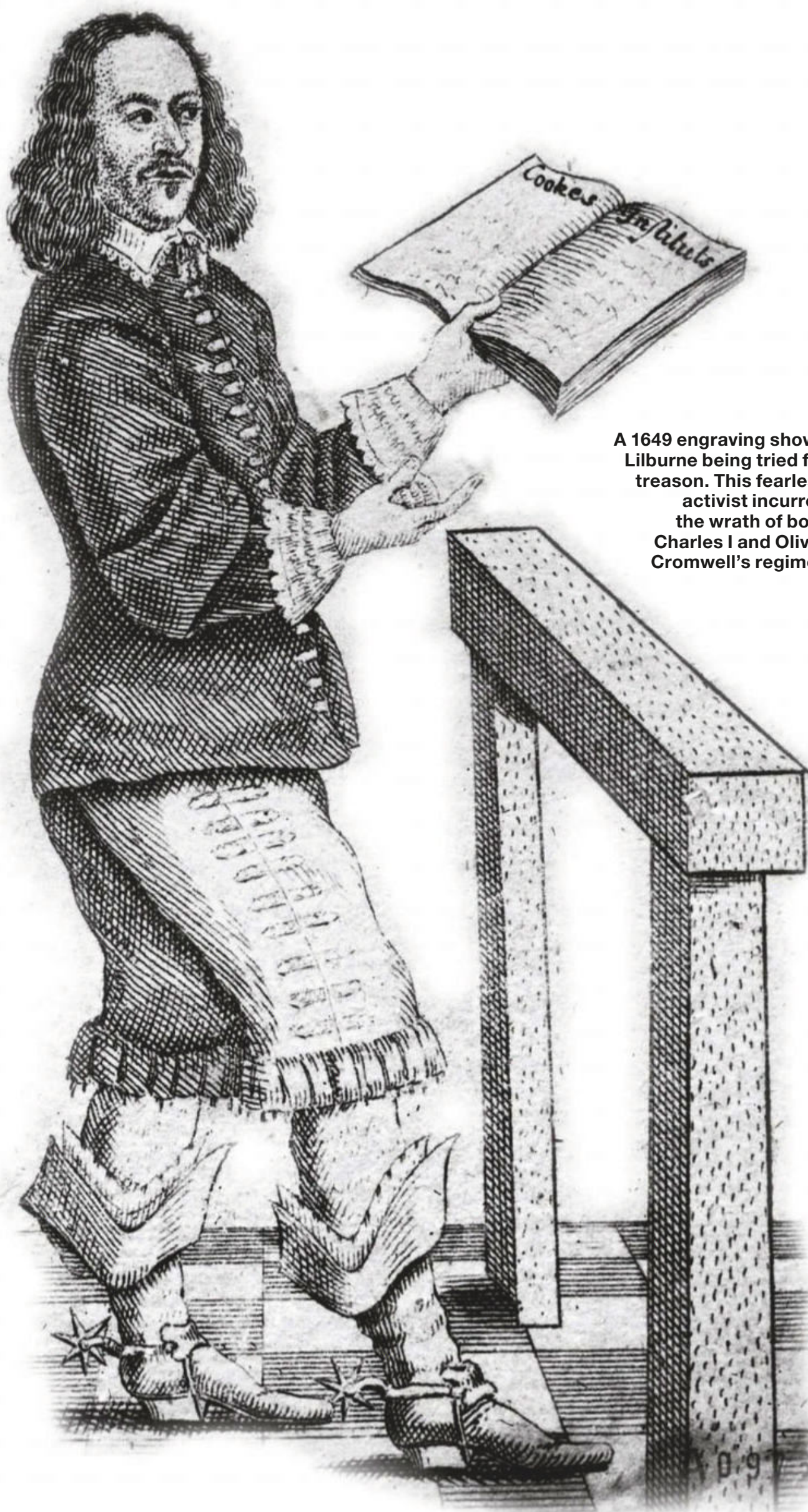
Today, Lilburne (1615–57) is primarily associated with the Levellers, the small but vocal band of activists who emerged in the wake of the Civil War, calling for extended suffrage, equality before the law and religious toleration. His links with the Levellers, however, tell only half the story of a remarkable life. In fact, he had a much longer career as an activist, campaigning relentlessly for what he regarded as the rights of every freeborn Englishman – the right to remain silent and the right to trial by one’s peers among them. He was perhaps the inventor of the term ‘freeborn Englishman’, and refused to be gagged by the authorities. In taking on these battles, he blazed a trail for those in the future who opposed government attempts to use the courts to silence their critics.

## Draconian response

Born into a gentry family in Greenwich in 1615, Lilburne was in his early 20s when he first fell foul of the law. He was charged with importing seditious books into England, but refused to offer a plea. The authorities’ response to this contempt of court was draconian: Lilburne was whipped through the streets of London, pilloried, gagged and then thrown into prison.

Released three years later, he soon found himself in hot water again – this time accused of treason after fulminating against the Earl of Strafford, one of King Charles I’s key ministers and a man suspected of planning to raise an army to intimidate parliament.

Lilburne signed up unhesitatingly for the parliamentary armies on the outbreak of the



A 1649 engraving shows Lilburne being tried for treason. This fearless activist incurred the wrath of both Charles I and Oliver Cromwell’s regimes









The c1790s satirical cartoon 'A freeborn Englishman' – believed to be by Isaac Cruikshank – is an echo perhaps of John Lilburne's campaign for the right to speak his mind

Sydenham saw in the writings of Lilburne and his ilk one of the "exorbitancies" of the age, which "stained the glory of this nation". The "multitude of licentious and abusive pamphlets" turned the press into "a common strumpet to conceive and bring forth the froth of every idle and wanton fancy". Books, reason and judgment had been displaced by "Pasquils [lampoons] and Libels, stuff with... rancour and rage".

The parliamentary regime tried to reintroduce press control in the face of this anarchic public debate and its Committee of Examinations regularly heard cases relating to seditious or offensive publication: it was this committee that arrested and detained Lilburne so often in 1645. Almost as much as anything else, the use of this committee by his political enemies within the parliamentary coalition convinced Lilburne that the new regime might be just as tyrannous as the old.

Lilburne's activism may have appalled the likes of Cuthbert Sydenham, but to later

advocates of freedom of expression it was an inspiration. For example, in 1763 the radical journalist and MP John Wilkes was prosecuted for seditious libel after writing an article criticising a parliamentary speech given in the name of King George III. On the eve of his trial, Wilkes was presented with one of Lilburne's pamphlets and a medal struck to celebrate his acquittal in 1649.

Thirty years later, Jeremiah Joyce, a Unitarian minister, was arrested at a meeting of the London Corresponding Society and charged with treasonable practices. He took a bound copy of Lilburne's tracts to his arraignment at the Old Bailey, where he refused to answer questions without a lawyer present. Joyce spent four months in prison before the charges were dropped.

Joyce's collection of Lilburne pamphlets later passed into the hands of William Hone, a radical bookseller who had first read one of Lilburne's publications at the age of 11. Hone himself stood trial in 1817 in the

## In 1763, on the eve of his trial for criticising George III, the MP John Wilkes was presented with one of Lilburne's pamphlets

tense aftermath of the Napoleonic Wars. He modelled his courtroom performance on Lilburne, pouring scorn on the government's charges and securing acquittal by the jury. In doing so he helped to discredit the seditious libel laws as a tool of repression.

The associations between the rights of the freeborn Englishman and the freedom to speak are captured in a c1790s portrayal (shown left) of a bedraggled man dressed in rags and clasped in chains, with his lips padlocked. Accompanying the image are the scathingly ironic words: "A freeborn Englishman: the admiration of the world, the envy of surrounding nations."

John Lilburne did not campaign explicitly for a free press. But he did claim that he wanted to combat his political enemies on equal terms, "namely that the presse might be as open for us as for you". He thought of his battle more broadly, as the fight to protect Englishmen from all corrupt and political uses of the law. He opposed the Stationers' monopoly on the same grounds that he opposed the clergy monopoly on religious teaching or the Merchant Adventurers' control over the cloth trade. These were all invented powers infringing on the rights of the Englishman. "I have been in the field with my sword in my hand," he wrote, "to venter my life and my blood (against Tyrants) for the preservation of my Freedom."

Lilburne did fight, and bravely too. Stubborn and daring, he staked his claim to the common freedom of the people at enormous personal cost (he would die on parole in 1657, while visiting his wife). In doing so, he made a significant contribution to the longer struggle for a free press, and struck a blow against the governments that would gag it. **H**

**Mike Braddick** is professor of history at the University of Sheffield. His books include *The Common Freedom of the People: John Lilburne and the English Revolution* (OUP, 2018)

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# THE **HISTORY** ESSAY



French prime minister Georges Clemenceau (left), US president Woodrow Wilson (centre) and British PM David Lloyd George at the signing of the Treaty of Versailles in June 1919. The treaty's provisions have been blamed for causing the Second World War

## **DID THE VERSAILLES PEACE TRIGGER ANOTHER WAR?**

A century ago, the Paris Peace Conference brought an end to the First World War. But was the resulting Treaty of Versailles so harsh on the German people that it guaranteed a second global conflict?

**By David Reynolds**



Two quaking German delegates walked the length of the Hall of Mirrors at the Palace of Versailles to sign one of the most famous, even notorious, treaties in history. “The silence is terrifying,” wrote British diplomat Harold Nicolson in his diary. “They keep their eyes fixed away from those

2,000 staring eyes... They are deathly pale.” The Paris Peace Conference had opened on 18 January 1919 in Louis XIV’s grandiose palace. The negotiations were conducted in many places across the French capital and the result was no fewer than five treaties – named after various Parisian suburbs – each with one of the defeated Central Powers. But the most consequential of these was the Treaty of Versailles with Germany, signed in the Hall of Mirrors on 28 June 1919.

For France, vengeance was sweet. “*Une belle journée*,” Georges Clemenceau, the French premier, declared tearfully. He told the assemblage: “We are here to sign a treaty of peace.” Both the timing and venue had been carefully calculated by the French. The start date, 18 January, was the anniversary of the day in 1871 when Wilhelm I had been proclaimed as emperor of the new German Reich in the Hall of Mirrors. This had been a deliberate act of political theatre by his chancellor, Count Otto von Bismarck, to rub French noses in the degradation of their defeat in the Franco-Prussian War. And so, after victory in the Great War, the French relished their chance to repay that humiliation with interest, formally administering the Reich’s last rites in the place where it had been born.

But almost as soon as the ink was dry, participants and commentators debated Clemenceau’s verdict. Was Versailles a treaty of peace? Or did it set the stage for another great war? Were the victor powers at Paris ‘peacemakers’ – or actually ‘warmakers’?

The most celebrated indictment was delivered by the young economist John Maynard Keynes, a disillusioned member of the British delegation in Paris. His bestselling polemic, *The Economic Consequences of the Peace*, published in December 1919, denounced the treaty as a “Carthaginian peace” (the term deriving from the total subjugation imposed on Carthage by Rome), with a “policy of reducing Germany to servitude for a generation” and thereby causing “the decay of the whole civilised life of Europe”.

In 1961, in an equally celebrated book, *The Origins of the Second World War*, the British historian AJP Taylor asserted that “the peace of Versailles lacked moral validity from the start” and claimed that “the first war explains the second and, in fact, caused it, in so

far as one event causes another”. Similarly, in 1984 the US diplomat and historian George Kennan flatly stated that the Second World War resulted from “the very silly and humiliating punitive peace imposed on Germany”.

In trying to unpack the argument that the peacemakers – deliberately or not – sowed the seeds of future conflict, we need first to remember that the fate of Germany was not the only issue on their agenda. The whole map of Europe had been ripped apart by war and revolution, bringing down four great dynastic empires – the Romanovs, Habsburgs, Hohenzollerns and Ottomans – that had ruled the centre and east of the continent for centuries. Out of the debris, nationalist politicians and their armies were already creating new states, such as Czechoslovakia, and resurrecting old states like Poland. So, the Paris conference was an attempt to clean up the mess: the peacemakers did not start with a blank slate.

Nor were the three major Allied powers of one mind. Clemenceau and the French were focused obsessively on controlling Germany, whose population was 50 per cent larger than that of France and whose economy in 1913 had been the most advanced in Europe. The British prime minister, David Lloyd George, though anxious to gain reparations from Germany, saw the German economy as vital to the recovery of Europe. He feared that too punitive a peace would feed a desire for revenge and encourage the spread of Bolshevism across the continent. US president Woodrow Wilson was more detached from European specifics: his consuming ambition was to create a League of Nations to guarantee peace and security.

The resulting peace treaty was therefore a messy compromise between the Big Three. The French recovered Alsace and Lorraine, ceded in 1871 after defeat to Prussia, but were not allowed to annex the Rhineland in perpetuity. Instead Britain and America offered a joint guarantee of French security if Germany attacked again. Wilson got his League of Nations, but on terms that seemed to open up the prospect of unlimited obligations to keep the peace without having adequate power to do so.

Poland was reinvented as a state after more than a century of partition between Germany, Russia and Austria – but its



**A US cartoon from 1919 satirising the way Senate critics had battered the treaty. President Wilson was unable to secure a majority to ratify it**



The whole map of Europe had been ripped apart by war and revolution. The Paris conference was an attempt to clean up the mess: the peacemakers did not start with a blank slate



**British soldiers working on a map of Poland in the Hotel Astoria, Paris. Poland's revival as a state was bitterly resented in Berlin – particularly for the 'Polish corridor' to the Baltic Sea that split East Prussia from the rest of Germany**

revival was bitterly resented in Berlin, not least for the 'Polish corridor' that gave the new state access to the Baltic Sea at the expense of separating West and East Prussia. The British warned of German revanchism, but in the face of strong Franco-American support for Polish demands, they could only mitigate the situation by making Danzig (now Gdańsk in Poland), which was then largely German in population, into a 'free city' rather than part of Poland.

Compromise was not only the result of disputes among the leading victor powers. It also reflected the fact that the Allies were not as strongly placed as they seemed. In fact, whatever the French hoped, 1919 was not adequate revenge for 1871. A genuine turning of the tables would have required a treaty to be forced upon Germany at its own historic heart, at Sanssouci or another of Frederick the Great's palaces in Potsdam on the outskirts of Berlin. Yet this was impossible in 1919 because Germany had not been invaded, conquered and occupied. The armistice was therefore incomprehensible to millions of Germans. They became easy prey to those on the right such as Adolf Hitler who blamed it on a treacherous

'stab in the back' by pacifists, Bolsheviks and especially Jews. For these German rightists, 1918 was not defeat but actually a thwarted victory that had to be redeemed: that's why Marshal Ferdinand Foch predicted darkly that Versailles was not a peace but merely an armistice for 20 years.

So, the fact that in 1919 the Allies imposed a Treaty of Versailles on Germany, not a Treaty of Potsdam, highlights the incompleteness of their victory. This became all too apparent when the US, whose economic strength and manpower had been crucial in sapping the German will to fight in 1918, pulled back from its wartime engagement in Europe. Unwilling to compromise, Wilson failed to get the necessary two-thirds majority in the Senate to secure ratification of the Treaty of Versailles. Since he had tied the League and the Anglo-American guarantee of French security to the treaty, the Americans reneged on those as well. The British had no intention of underwriting France by themselves, so the guarantee lapsed, leaving the French more exposed and therefore more intransigent.

Which brings us back to Keynes and the Carthaginian peace. Was it reparations that really embittered Germans, and broke their economy? No precise bill was fixed at Paris: the Treaty of Versailles simply established the principle that Germany and its allies were



## Extracting reparations from Germany represented a desperate attempt to secure an economic substitute for the decisive victory the Allies had failed to win on the battlefield

responsible for the damage caused by their war of aggression (article 231), while also acknowledging in article 232 that their resources were not adequate to make “complete reparation”. Similar pairs of balancing statements were inserted in all the treaties with the defeated powers but only the Germans (for propaganda reasons) presented the reparations issue as an Allied imputation of ‘war guilt’ – a phrase never used in the treaty.

In 1921, an Allied commission meeting drew up a schedule of reparations payments for Germany of 132 billion gold marks, or about \$33 billion, plus interest. This draconian headline sum was, however, largely window dressing to satisfy French and British hardliners. In practice, the amount the Allies intended to exact was about 50 billion marks over 36 years, which still seemed a huge sum.

Viewed historically, though, the reparations bill was the latest round in a Franco-German game of tit for tat. When French policy-makers considered reparations in 1919, they had in mind the provisions of the Treaty of Frankfurt in 1871, which Bismarck imposed on France after its devastating defeat. He, in turn, had looked back to Napoleon’s treatment of Prussia in the Treaty of Tilsit in 1807. The 1921 London Schedule of Payments imposed at most an annual burden of around 8 per cent of German national income – less than the 9–16 per cent that France paid annually in reparations after 1871. So the bill, most economic historians agree, was not financially intolerable.

**T**he real issue was political. The Germans had not accepted defeat and had no intention of paying. For the French, conversely, extracting reparations represented a desperate attempt to secure an economic substitute for the decisive victory that the Allies had failed to win on the battlefield in 1918. In short, as one German official put it, the struggle over reparations was “the continuation of the war by other means”.

Successive Weimar governments went to great lengths to avoid paying their regular instalments of reparations. In the early 1920s, the economics ministry bought substantial amounts of foreign currency to help push down the value of the German mark and make German exports more competitive. An export boom, according to one key economic adviser, would “ruin trade with England and America, so that the creditors themselves will come to us to require modification” of the 1921 schedule.

“The goal of our entire policy must be the dismantling of the London ultimatum,” argued the German chancellor, Joseph Wirth, in 1922. He warned against attempts to balance the budget, for example by imposing a property tax, because this would show that the country’s fiscal problems were not insuperable and that money could be found for reparations – if Germans wanted to find it.

Covering this budget deficit meant printing money, which fuelled inflation, but tycoon Hugo Stinnes spoke



**A German woman lights her stove with banknotes. In the early 1920s, marks lost value by the hour because of hyperinflation**

for much of the German elite when he insisted in 1922 that “the choice had been between inflation and revolution”. It was, he said, “a question of your money or your life”. Yet inflation caused revolution of a different sort. From the autumn of 1922, price rises spiralled into hyperinflation on a scale dwarfing anywhere else in Europe.

Germany defaulted on its reparations payments, so in January 1923 the French and Belgians, following the principle of war by other means, sent in troops to occupy the Ruhr, Germany’s industrial heartland, and extract reparations in kind by force. Spontaneous local protests escalated into a campaign of passive resistance subsidised by the German government, which spread across the whole country.

By the time a new coalition led by Gustav Stresemann called off passive resistance, the currency had been destroyed and the Ruhr was on the brink of famine. In January 1914, it took 4.2 marks to buy one US dollar; a decade later, the nominal exchange rate was 4.2 trillion marks (an addition of 12 zeros). During 1923, daily employees collected their wages in baskets or wheelbarrows, often using them immediately to pay bills and buy goods because the banknotes lost value literally hour by hour. What



**A poster for passive resistance to the Ruhr occupation. The caption reads: “No, you won’t be able to force me!”**





GETTY IMAGES

A demonstration against the Treaty of Versailles, organised by the Nazi party, in Berlin on 28 June 1933. By the early 1930s, a third of Germany's workforce was unemployed and the banking system was in ruins, leaving the country open to nationalist bombast



## THE HISTORY ESSAY

When Adolf Hitler gained power, enthusiasm for his campaign to tear up the 'Diktat' of Versailles blinded millions of Germans to the true nature of his regime



Young Germans in a job centre, c1930. As the Great Depression crippled the economy, daily life became a nightmare for millions

pulled the country back from the brink was financial intervention by bankers in London and New York. In 1924, they provided funds to support a new German currency (the now worthless wartime Papiermark being replaced by the Reichsmark) and helped restructure reparations payments at a lower level, backed by an international loan. This package was known as the Dawes Plan, testimony not only to the energetic chairmanship of Charles Dawes, a Chicago banker, but also to the leading role played by US finance. Under this settlement, the Germans got the French out of the Ruhr, while France started to get reparations again from Germany.

During the 1920s, US investors became enmeshed in the German economy: the Dawes loan, floated in October 1924 by a nationwide syndicate of 400 banks and 800 bond houses, triggered a flood of US investment, followed by British and other lenders. Between 1924 and 1930, Germany borrowed nearly three times what it paid in reparations. The rest of the money was invested in German business (Ford and General Motors both bought up several automobile plants), in shares and municipal bonds – issued to pay for apartments, schools and other amenities. In short, foreign loans were being used in the same way as currency depreciation in the early 1920s – to sidestep the reparations burden and subsidise growth.

But just as currency depreciation eventually led to hyperinflation, so debt dependence became catastrophic when US loans tailed off after the Wall Street crash of 1929, destabilising the banking system just as Germany's economy was sliding into recession. By 1932, industrial production was only 60 per cent of the 1929 figure and a third of the workforce was unemployed. Millions more were on

reduced wages and much of the banking system had fallen apart. As a result of Germany's depression, the most acute in Europe in the early 1930s, daily existence became a nightmare for the second time in less than a decade.

It's no surprise that many Germans were ready to turn to a nationalist messiah. In the election of September 1930, the Nazi party won 18 per cent of the vote, becoming overnight the second largest party in the Reichstag. "I'll see to it that prices remain stable," Hitler asserted bombastically. "That's what my stormtroopers are for." There is "no doubt", observes historian Jürgen von Krüedener, "that the rise of Hitler would have been unthinkable without the catastrophic effects of the Depression".

The peacemakers made many mistakes, but they did not cause the next war. The Treaty of Versailles was a compromise document and, as a result, fell between two stools, alienating Germany without coercing it. It was also dependent on American involvement in Europe, which receded after 1919 – so that the US failed to ratify the treaty, join the league or honour the Anglo-American guarantee of French security that mattered so much in Paris.

The root problem was that Germany had not been comprehensively defeated on the battlefield. With its troops still holding a front in France and Belgium when the armistice was signed, its people were susceptible to arguments from the right that they had been robbed of victory by traitors at home. Reparations were so deeply resented, in practice and in principle, that successive Weimar governments risked economic stability in order to avoid having to pay. And when Hitler gained power, enthusiasm for his campaign to tear up the 'Diktat' of Versailles blinded millions of Germans to the true nature of his regime.

Little wonder that, when the Allies fought the next world war, they insisted on Germany's "unconditional surrender," occupied the whole of the country and held their victory conference at Potsdam. There would not be another Treaty of Versailles. ■

**Professor David Reynolds** is professor of international history at the University of Cambridge. His most recent book, co-authored with Vladimir Pechatnov, is *The Kremlin Letters: Stalin's Wartime Correspondence with Churchill and Roosevelt* (YUP, 2018)

### DISCOVER MORE

#### BOOK

► **The Long Shadow: The Great War and the Twentieth Century** by David Reynolds (Simon & Schuster, 2013)

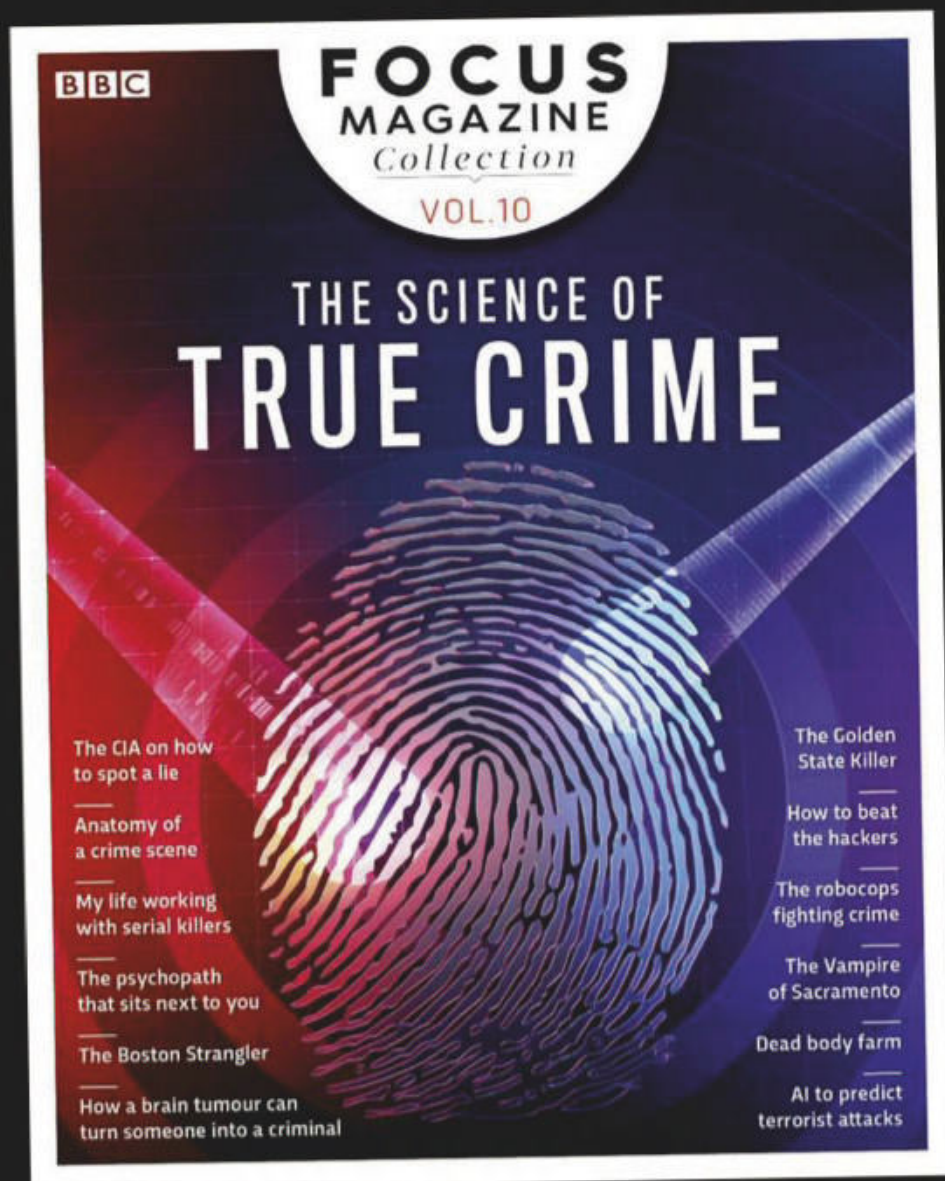
#### WEBSITE

► You can read more about **the First World War and its aftermath** on **History Extra**, the website of *BBC History Magazine*, at [historyextra.com/period/first-world-war](http://historyextra.com/period/first-world-war)



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## COVER STORY



# Who betrayed Mary, Queen of Scots?

Her life story reads like a Shakespearean tragedy, a sorry tale of rape, murder and treachery. But who should take the blame for Mary, Queen of Scots' demise? As a film on Mary hits cinemas, **Kate Williams**, author of a new book on the ill-fated queen, sets out the case against six potential culprits – and Mary herself





**A monarch without allies**  
Mary Stuart, shown here in a painting after Nicholas Hilliard, might have made a good queen, says Kate Williams, but the odds were stacked against her



## The Guise family

Mary's mother had her infant daughter packed off to France

Mary, Queen of Scots had the misfortune to ascend the Scottish throne at the very moment when the kings of England and France were eyeing her nation greedily – seeing in it the opportunity to extend their own power. And so, from the moment she was born (on 8 December 1542), Mary was exploited by two powerful kings – and also her own family.

Mary was proclaimed queen at the tender age of six days, on the death of her father, King James V. No sooner had James gone to his grave than Henry VIII of England was declaring his intention to marry Mary to his son, Edward, as a means of gaining control of Scotland. This prospect was unpalatable to Mary's mother, Mary of Guise – who was acting as queen regent – and so she had her five-year-old daughter packed off to France to be brought up as the future wife of the dauphin, Francis, son of the French king, Henry II. The Guise family hoped to attain more influence at the French court through Mary.

Everything about Mary's union with Francis was about Scotland being subsumed into France – much like the baby sucking on the mother's breast, as one poet put it. Worse still, Henry II encouraged Mary to proclaim that she and her husband were king and queen of England – this announcement would have fateful consequences, as it infuriated Elizabeth I.

Henry II's plan for Scotland to be absorbed into France broke apart when Francis died, aged 16, in 1560. Mary was now a widow, unwanted at the French court. And so she returned to Scotland. Unlike Elizabeth I, who grew up on the outskirts of her country's court and developed a firm group of loyal men around her, Mary returned to be queen of a country she had not seen since she was five. It was a case of out of the French frying pan, into the fire.

An oil on canvas portrait of Mary, Queen of Scots' mother, Mary of Guise



## Henry, Lord Darnley

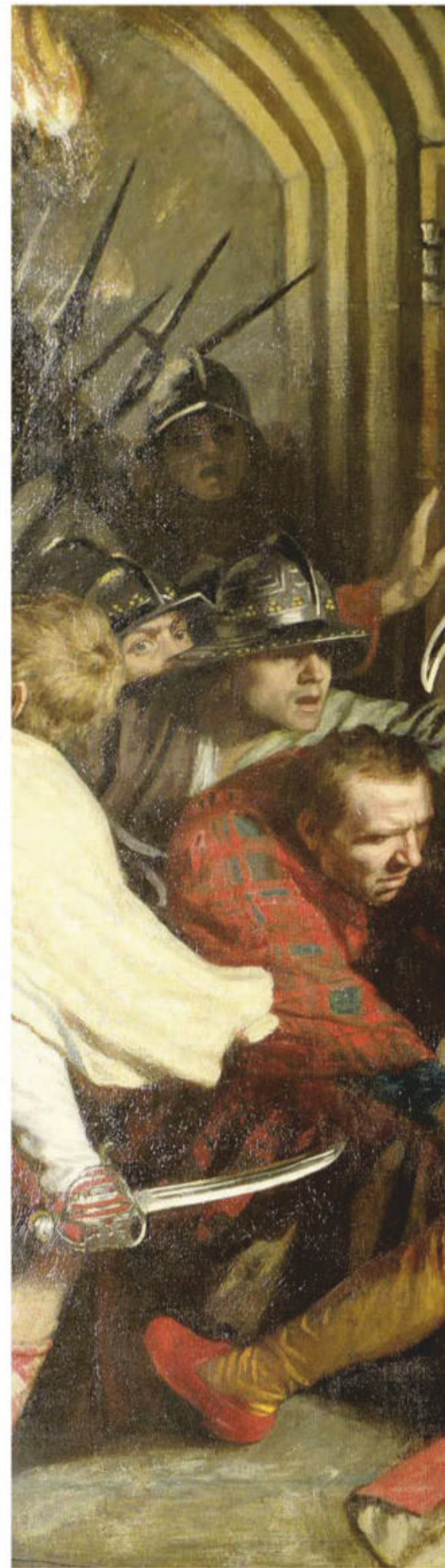
Mary's second husband led a coup against her

When, in 1564, Elizabeth I offered Robert Dudley, Earl of Leicester to Mary as a husband, she was horrified by the idea. Dudley was a traitor's son, believed to be Elizabeth's lover, and gossip across Europe suggested that he had an involvement in the suspicious death of his own wife. To top it off, Elizabeth wanted all three of them to live at her court together, something Mary could never agree to.

Instead, Mary decided to marry her relation, Henry, Lord Darnley. He was handsome, young and possessed of royal blood, but weak and corrupt. Things started to unravel very soon after the marriage in 1565. He wanted power – to be king, not just consort – but Mary resisted. He fell out with all of the lords, especially the powerful James Stewart, Earl of Moray, and he plotted against his wife.

Then one night in March 1566, Darnley and a group of conspirators broke into Mary's supper chamber. They seized her secretary, David Rizzio, and stabbed him repeatedly before throwing him down the stairs. But Rizzio was not their ultimate target. This was a coup against Mary – and, in a bid to force the queen to submit to becoming a figurehead, the conspirators took her prisoner.

Mary managed to win Darnley back over to help her escape – but she could not trust him after all he had done, and the lords hated him. They told her they would deal with him and she told them she would not countenance such a thing. But, on the morning of 10 February 1567, Darnley's house was blown up, and he and his servant were found dead nearby. Darnley had betrayed Mary by plotting against her, and betrayed himself with his violent and angry behaviour – but when the lords wanted him out of the way, he became the victim.







The 1566 murder of Mary's secretary, David Rizzio, represented here in a 1787 oil painting by John Opie. The killing presaged further violence as Henry, Lord Darnley tried to seize power

## The Earl of Bothwell

Husband number three ambushed and raped her

Mary saw the Scottish nobleman James Hepburn, 1st Duke of Orkney and 4th Earl of Bothwell, as a friend. He had befriended her while she was in France, visiting in his capacity as Lord High Admiral, and helped to organise her return back to Scotland when she was 18. Most significant was the fact that he was one of those who helped her escape after her secretary, David Rizzio, was killed and she was imprisoned by a group of conspirators.

But as Mary's marriage to Lord Darnley began to fail, Bothwell's efforts to gain power over her increased – and he played a key role in Darnley's murder.

Less than three months after the death of Darnley in February 1567, Bothwell ambushed Mary while she was travelling and told her she must come with him, as there was rioting in Edinburgh. She trusted him, and agreed to go with him.

Bothwell took Mary back to his castle, Dunbar, and raped her. He planned to force her to marry him – most young women at the time, particularly heiresses, were expected to wed their assaulters. Believing she was pregnant, that's what Mary did.

When, finally, the Earl of Moray, Mary's half-brother, engaged the royal couple on the battlefield in June 1567, Bothwell fled and Mary was taken captive. Her cruel, reckless third husband was captured at sea by the king of Denmark and held prisoner until his death in April 1578.



The Earl of Bothwell was, says Kate Williams, a “cruel, reckless” man who kidnapped and raped Mary

*Darnley wanted power for himself – to be king, not just consort. And when Mary resisted, he led a coup against his wife*



## The Earl of Moray

Mary's half-brother turned out to be her greatest enemy

On the face of it, Mary's half-brother was her greatest supporter. He had accompanied her to France when she was five, had been a long-term advisor and, when Mary was first widowed, had counselled her to return to Scotland to take the throne.

But Moray's motives were dubious. He wanted power for himself and – hampered by a weak claim to the throne, due to his illegitimate status as the son of James V and his mistress, Lady Margaret Erskine – saw Mary as the fastest way of gaining it. She would rule as a figurehead for him. But Mary was having none of it, and so began Moray's repeated attempts to unseat her.

Mary's marriage to Lord Darnley infuriated Moray because he feared this new rival would seize his lands and reduce his power. And so Moray and his allies plotted Darnley's murder. When the deed was finally done, he cunningly deflected the blame on to Mary, encouraging her to leave the investigation to the council of lords that had been appointed to advise her. But the council did little to find the murderers.

Mary survived this attack on her throne, but her luck wouldn't last. So unpopular was her marriage to Bothwell that it gave Moray the opportunity to gather around him an array of Scottish lords and make a final military attack to win power. He succeeded, took Mary captive and locked her in isolated Lochleven Castle. There, Moray visited the queen, who was weakened by sickness and a miscarriage, and coolly told her that she must abdicate. In 1568, she escaped (with the aid of the brother of the castle's owner) and fled to England.

Moray now busied himself dividing up Mary's treasures – both the queen of France, Catherine de Medici, and Elizabeth I sought to buy his sister's famous black pearls. He had gained the power and the riches he had craved – while acting as regent for Mary's son, James – until he was shot in Linlithgow in 1570. Power in Scotland was a dangerous game.

*Moray visited the captive Mary, who was weakened by sickness and a miscarriage, and coolly told her that she must abdicate*



Moray was a chief engineer of Mary's downfall, locking up the queen and forcing her to abdicate

## William Cecil

The English minister plotted Mary's downfall for decades

Elizabeth's chief minister, William Cecil (1520–98), always hated Mary and wanted her off the throne. Mary was simply too Catholic for his tastes, and anyway he had no time for any other female ruler than Elizabeth. Mary was Elizabeth's heir, unless the English queen had a child – and so she was, to Cecil, a constant threat. Most of the lords in Scotland were in Cecil's pocket, notably Moray, paid to undermine Mary and hopefully remove her. Whether Cecil knew about their coup attempts or not, his funds assisted them.

Elizabeth's sympathy for Mary angered Cecil and he repeatedly discouraged the English queen from helping her cousin. When Mary was imprisoned in Loch Leven Castle and forced to abdicate, Elizabeth was furious and wanted to intervene, but Cecil dissuaded her. And when Mary fled into England, hoping that Elizabeth would assist her, Cecil pushed hard for Mary to be submitted to an inquiry for involvement in the death of Darnley. The aim was not to find her guilty or innocent, but to create a non-verdict (which would ensure that she continued to languish in prison).

So Mary was kept locked up, under a watch that grew so tight that, in the words of her keeper, not even a flea could escape her rooms. But what Cecil – and other ministers such as Francis Walsingham – *really* wanted was an excuse to get rid of his royal captive. And so a double agent was hired, who volunteered to take her letters to France. Every one was opened and decoded. When, finally, after nearly 20 years of imprisonment, Mary agreed to conspire in a plot against her cousin, Cecil had the evidence he needed to execute her.



William Cecil saw Mary as a danger to Elizabeth I because she was potentially a rallying cause for Catholics





Elizabeth I was reluctant to order Mary's death for fear of setting a precedent

## Elizabeth I

When it came to the crunch, England's queen put her own interests first

How much did Elizabeth know about William Cecil's plots against Mary? Did she know that he was paying the men around Mary to undermine and unseat her? Personally, I believe not – although Elizabeth did receive Mary's great rival, Lord Moray, when he came to England to avoid the heat of suspicion after the death of Darnley.

Elizabeth undoubtedly had sympathy for her cousin (Mary's grandmother, Margaret Tudor, was Elizabeth's aunt). She was also concerned that if one woman was deprived of her throne, then it would reflect badly on all queens.

However, when Mary arrived in England in 1568 after being deposed from the throne, Elizabeth had a problem on her hands. Restoring her cousin to the Scottish throne

would involve a costly and perhaps unsuccessful military campaign. Meanwhile, Cecil was keen to support the Protestant government of Moray. He was also adamantly opposed to leaving Mary free, as he feared Catholic plotters might group around her.

Mary begged Elizabeth to allow her to live quietly in France, and the king of France supported her wish – but Elizabeth refused. Instead, she had Mary locked up, on the grounds that she knew about the plot to murder Lord Darnley (an accusation that was supported by no real evidence).

If locking up Mary was a painful decision for Elizabeth, then the dilemma with which she was presented two decades later – when it emerged that Mary had given her support to a plot to unseat the English queen – was more

tortuous still. Mary was put on trial and found guilty of treason. Parliament and the queen's ministers were adamant that she should die. But Elizabeth was reluctant. Finally she gave in and signed the execution warrant. Cecil enacted it immediately and Elizabeth was shocked and devastated – she perhaps had hoped to change her mind.

Elizabeth had feared the fury of Catholic Europe. She also dreaded that executing a queen would undermine the whole concept of monarchy. And, as it turned out, Elizabeth was right to be worried. The campaign to send Mary to the block had emboldened parliament. The trial and subsequent execution of a queen of Scotland in 1587 paved the way for the trial and execution of a king of England, Charles I, 60 years later.





Mary's execution shown in a c1613 watercolour. The queen "had not a single person she could trust," writes Kate Williams

## And finally... Mary herself

How much blame should the Queen of Scots shoulder for her own demise?

Mary, Queen of Scots is often seen as the author of her own downfall. But, from the start, the odds were stacked against her. She was manipulated, she was subjected to repeated mutinies, she was assaulted and she was imprisoned.

As I argue in my recent book on Elizabeth and Mary, she could have been an excellent queen. When she moved to Scotland as queen at the age of 18, she encouraged religious toleration, engaged advisors from all the major clans and listened to their counsel, even when they

were working against her. Elizabeth's style of queenship, similarly predicated on expressing respect for her advisers and instituting religious toleration, was rightly praised.

When Elizabeth's ministers undermined her, they did so by lying to her and going behind her back. By contrast, Mary's advisers staged coups and tried to abduct their monarch – even the ones she thought she could trust, such as her treacherous half-brother, the Earl of Moray.

Mary believed that the best way to protect herself was through marriage. Undoubtedly, her choice of husband was unwise in that her union with Lord Darnley only exacerbated her problems, but in reality she had no option that would have satisfied the Scottish lords.

Mary's biggest mistake was to flee to England after she lost her throne. She was convinced that Elizabeth I would help her return to power. That support never materialised and, famously, the two never even met. Locked up in England with no prospect of release or escape, Mary became one of the

most isolated figures in royal history. And that isolation undoubtedly played a part in her writing the letter that would lead to her execution: throwing her weight behind the 'Babington Plot' to assassinate Elizabeth I.

Monarchs are always surrounded by treachery, but Mary had not a single person she could trust. **H**

Kate Williams is an author, broadcaster and professor of public engagement with history at the University of Reading. Her presenting credits include *The Stuarts on Yesterday*

### DISCOVER MORE

#### FILM

► **Mary Queen of Scots**, starring Saoirse Ronan as Mary and Margot Robbie as Elizabeth I, premieres in British cinemas on 18 January

#### BOOK

► **Rival Queens: The Betrayal of Mary, Queen of Scots** by Kate Williams (Hutchinson, September 2018)

*Mary's biggest error was to flee to England. Here she became one of the most isolated royals in history*





# Anglo-Saxon beasts of death

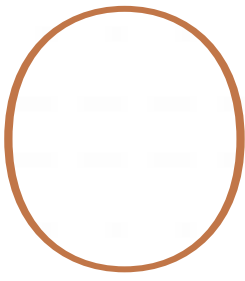
For 10th-century warriors, the appearance of wolves, ravens and eagles on the battlefield meant an unlucky few had been chosen to die.

**Eric Lacey** digs into a grisly superstition

ILLUSTRATIONS BY ROSS CRAIG - ZIILLUSTRATIONS



**The wolf and raven soon learned that groups of shiny, metal-clad people heading in the same direction meant food**

n the banks of the river Blackwater, near Maldon in Essex, stood an array of Anglo-Saxons, weapons drawn. Facing them, on the tiny Northey Island, was a band of Vikings. They had come to harry and pillage, but could not cross a narrow tidal causeway to the mainland without confronting the Anglo-Saxon army.

Attempts to bribe their way across had failed and so, on this day in August 991, the Vikings now readied themselves for the inevitable. Raising their shields, they waded to the shore and lined up in formation. On both sides, the soldiers sized up their foes and tightened their grips on their weapons. Loud cries erupted over the battlefield – not from the soldiers, but from the ravens and eagles that wheeled overhead, already in position to feed on the imminent corpses. They had arrived there, the Anglo-Saxon poem *The Battle of Maldon* tells us, because “*was seo tid cumen þæt þær fæge men feallan sceoldon*” (the time had come for doomed men to fall).

The arrival of these birds before the fighting had even begun reads like something out of myth or legend, and stands out starkly from the gritty, matter-of-fact account of the battle presented throughout the poem. Yet time and again, in the writings left to us by the Anglo-Saxons,

we hear of three particular animals – the raven, the eagle and the wolf – possessing the uncanny ability to presage death.

The animals that could do this were universally known as scavengers. The raven and wolf are still well known for this; it is not as well known today that the white-tailed eagle (the largest British bird of prey) also scavenges when possible. It was commonplace in Anglo-Saxon texts to convey the desolation of war by presenting the corpses of men as mere food for the raven, eagle and wolf, and for this reason they are called the ‘beasts of battle’. Sometimes, they were noted for arriving after the armies had fought, to graze on the slain. This is the case in another memorialising poem, *The Battle of Brunanburh*, celebrating an Anglo-Saxon victory over an array of enemies in 937. More often than not, however, they emerge on the edges of the battlefield, as they do in *The Battle of Maldon*, before the fighting begins.

## Old English epic

Historians have tended to dismiss as mere poetic licence accounts of animals arriving on the scene in advance of the fighting. This is because, outside of the two memorial poems mentioned already, such descriptions appear in works that today we might deem literary rather than historical. These include the old English epic *Beowulf*; versified biblical stories; and an account of the legend of Helena, mother of the Roman emperor Constantine the Great, who supposedly found fragments of the True Cross.

For the Anglo-Saxons, however, these texts were repositories of historical knowledge, and imposing our sharp distinction between fiction and non-fiction is anachronistic. The biblical accounts of Judith defeating the Assyrians or Moses leading the tribes of Israel out of Egypt were, to the Anglo-Saxons, unquestionable truths. And despite the fact that it contained trolls and a dragon, *Beowulf* described ancestors who were well known and whose deeds were recorded elsewhere.

There are plenty of reasons why we should believe the Anglo-Saxons when they say the beasts of battle appeared before combat. After all, they would have frequently encountered them: the Anglo-Saxons lived closer to nature than we do, and all three creatures were once ubiquitous throughout Britain. The beasts have since experienced destruction of their





habitats and persecution; raven populations have fallen drastically, while the wolf and white-tailed eagle were hunted to extinction (though the latter was reintroduced in 1975). This means modern science has never had the opportunity to study the behaviour and interaction of the three species in the British Isles.

The raven, wolf and white-tailed eagle do, however, coexist in parts of northern and eastern Europe, and in North America the raven and wolf live alongside the white-tailed eagle's close relative, the bald eagle. What we see in these areas is a scavenging community active during the daylight hours, with all three foraging alongside each other, and an especially close (if one-sided) relationship between ravens and wolves. Wolves do the hard work of finding and opening carcasses, while ravens follow, observe whether the meat causes death or illness, and then feed on the leftovers.

The raven and wolf are also prolific learners. In Yellowstone National Park, Wyoming, where wolves were reintroduced in 1995 after a 70-year absence, ravens immediately learned to follow them. Where there are no wolves, ravens have learned to follow other apex predators, such as polar bears. Scientists who work with young ravens often exclaim – and sometimes lament – the efficiency with which the birds learn new behaviours. The famous zoologist Konrad Lorenz once inadvertently trained his pet raven Roah to steal laundry when he was trying to reward him for returning when called, and subsequently had to endure countless items of his neighbours' garments being delivered to him whenever Roah got peckish. Wolves are consistently observed outperforming their domestic counterparts in problem-solving and flexible learning tests, and demonstrate the ability to modify their behaviour individually and as a pack. Between wolf and raven, then, it would have been straightforward to learn that groups of unusually shiny, metal-clad people heading in the same direction meant food. And so they would have followed them to battle sites before fighting began.

### Awaiting the kill

In the absence of laboratories and controlled conditions for testing, the Anglo-Saxons came up with their own explanation for the animals' portentous appearances: that they could foretell the loss of life. In *Judith*, an epic describing the Old Testament heroine's beheading of the Assyrian general Holofernes, a raven and wolf watch eagerly as Judith's

countrymen close in on the fleeing enemy, because "they knew that the men of the [Jewish] nation intended to serve them their fill in doomed men". We see the same reasoning in *Beowulf*, where the impending annihilation of the hero's kingdom of Geatland by its neighbours is portrayed by the beasts zeroing in while discussing past banquets: "The raven, eager for the fated to die, shares many conversations with the eagle about how he succeeded at the feast when he plundered the corpses against the wolf."

Eerily, the Anglo-Saxons also seem to have believed that the beasts had some capacity to *choose* who would die.

This latter idea is only implicit in *The Battle of Maldon*, when they appear at the moment the poet proclaims that all the doomed men there must fall.

Elsewhere it is explicit. In *Exodus*, a poem about Moses's departure from Egypt, the raven tailing the pursuing Egyptians is called *wælceasega*: "chooser of the slain". *Elene*, the poem recounting Helena's discovery of the Cross, has numerous battles. At the outset of one, the wolf howls "did not conceal any *wælrune*". *Wælrune* is a difficult word to translate, but means something like "the hidden secrets of slaughter" – ie who would die. Indeed, this belief seems to have been so widespread that a philosophical rumination of loss called *The Wanderer* includes the following, in a list of the various ways people could die: "One was taken by war... another the grey wolf chose for death."

Today this may all seem like quaint superstition, but on that fateful day in 991, on the banks of the river Blackwater, the Anglo-Saxons facing the Viking band knew that not all of them would survive the coming skirmish. Overhead, ravens and eagles soared, patiently waiting for their next meal. What else were they supposed to think? **H**

Eric Lacey is a lecturer in English language at the University of Winchester

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#### WEBSITE

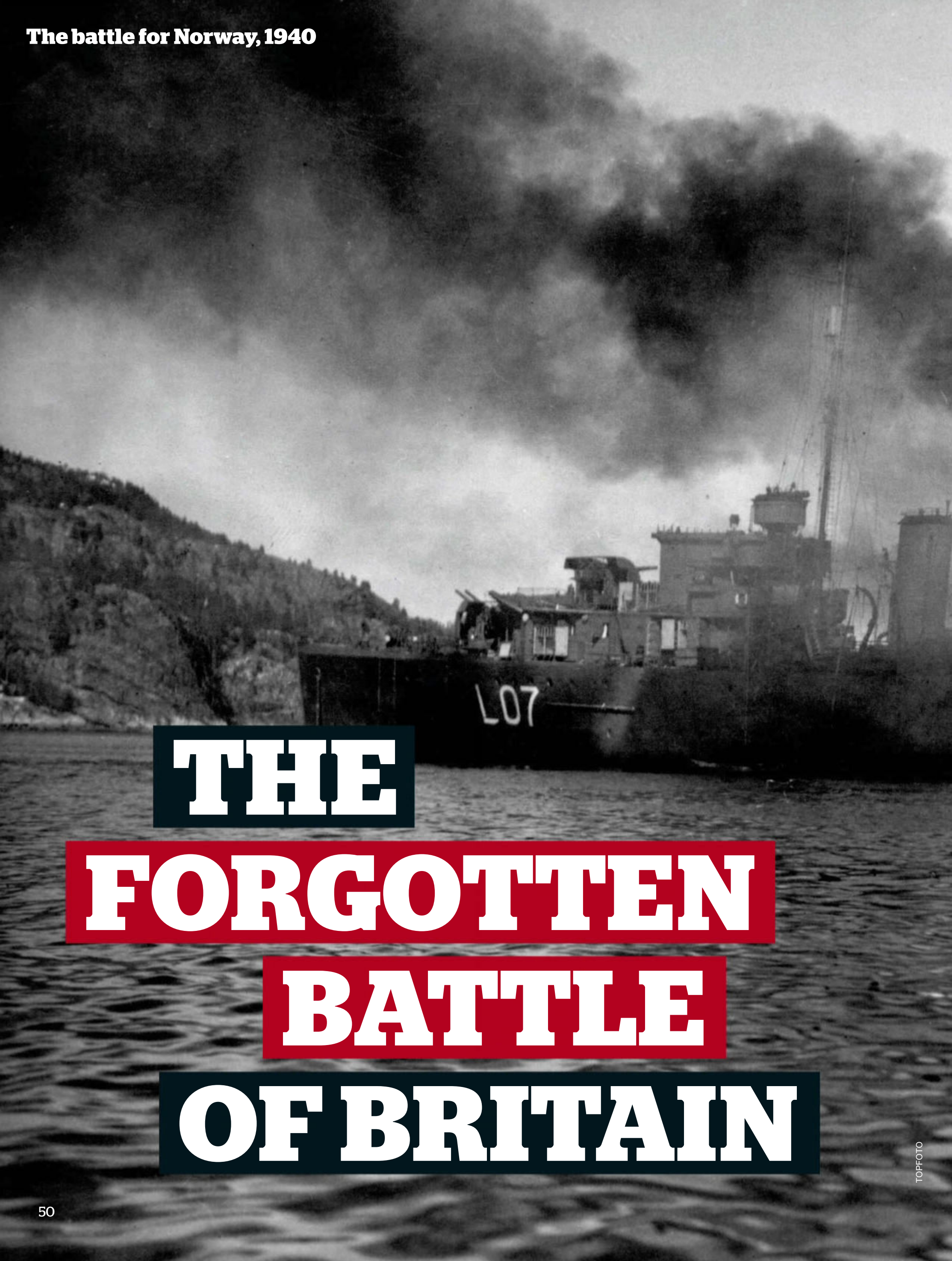
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**In *Beowulf*, the impending annihilation of the hero's kingdom is portrayed by the beasts zeroing in while discussing past banquets of corpses**



**The battle for Norway, 1940**




**THE**

**FORGOTTEN**

**BATTLE**

**OF BRITAIN**





The RAF's Battle of Britain heroics are credited with saving the nation. But, argues **Nick Hewitt**, it was the Royal Navy's savaging of the German fleet in the battle of Norway in the spring of 1940 that scuttled Hitler's grand invasion plans

**Sea change**

HMS *Bittern* on fire and severely damaged after a German air attack in Namsos fjord, 30 April 1940. Both sides sustained heavy losses in the battle of Norway but the German navy was less able to absorb these than its British foe



**W**e're all familiar with the story. In the summer of 1940, Royal Air Force pilots defeated Nazi Germany's Luftwaffe over

the skies of southern England and saved Britain from invasion. "Our fate," Winston Churchill wrote years later, "depended on victory in the air."

The Battle of Britain was a humiliation for the Luftwaffe, which may have lost almost 2,000 aircraft and well over 4,000 airmen killed, wounded, missing, and captured – undoubtedly far more than the British, although figures vary. It was a propaganda triumph for a beleaguered island, with strategic implications, in particular in the US, where Americans considered anew the UK's will to resist. It was an important victory, and the pilots' courage was undeniable.

But, in truth, there's little chance that Germany could have invaded England, even if the RAF had been defeated in the Battle of Britain. That's because, some weeks earlier, Britain had already, in effect, been saved. It had been saved in the battle of Norway, a now widely forgotten land, air and sea campaign fought between 9 April and 10 June 1940. And Britain's saviour, as so many times before in what Churchill called its "long island story", was the Royal Navy.

Supported by French, Norwegian and Polish allies, the British fleet wrought terrible damage on its German counterpart, the Kriegsmarine, in the icy waters of Scandinavia. So sizeable was that damage, it convinced Germany's naval leaders that the Kriegsmarine was totally inadequate to play a significant role in an invasion of Britain.

## Cat and mouse

At the start of 1940, Norway was neutral and almost defenceless. Unfortunately, through its economic activities, it was also incapable of staying quietly 'beneath the radar' of the belligerents. That's because, in winter, the ice-free northern port of Narvik provided the

only window on the world for Swedish iron ore – a vital resource for Germany. So, while Hitler conquered Poland and the Allies prepared themselves for a German attack into the Low Countries and France, both sides played cat and mouse in the north. On 16 February 1940, the British destroyer *Cossack* entered Norwegian waters illegally and a boarding party freed 300 captured British merchant sailors from the German supply ship *Altmark*, whose presence was also illegal.

But the stand-off wouldn't last for long. During the brief 1939–40 'Winter war' between Finland and the Soviet Union (who had signed a non-aggression pact with Germany), Britain and France prepared a force to cross Norwegian territory, aid the Finns and seize Narvik. Anticipating this, the Germans drew up plans for a full-scale invasion of Norway and Denmark, code-named Operation Weserübung. The Allies shelved their plans after the Soviet-Finnish armistice on 13 March 1940, opting instead for a more limited mission to mine Norwegian waters, but in Germany the commander-in-chief of the Kriegsmarine, Grand Admiral Erich Raeder, persuaded Hitler that Weserübung should proceed anyway. On 8 April, the British laid their mines. One day later, the Germans invaded.

Weserübung was an ambitious simultaneous sea and air attack on Norway's most important ports, accompanied by a rapid Blitzkrieg through Denmark (see our map of the campaign on page 55). The first warning came on the 8th, when the Polish submarine *Orzeł* sank a German transport and discovered it to be full of armed troops. The following day, the British destroyer *Glowworm* stumbled across the German heavy cruiser *Admiral Hipper* and was sunk with heavy loss of life, while the British battlecruiser *Repulse* fought a brief, inconclusive action against the German battlecruisers *Scharnhorst* and *Gneisenau*



**Grand Admiral Raeder, chief of the Kriegsmarine, had planned for a war in 1946, not 1940**

in the teeth of an Arctic gale. German paratroops seized the Norwegian capital, Oslo, in broad daylight, although when seaborne reinforcements came up the Oslo fjord, a Norwegian coastal defence battery sank the heavy cruiser *Blücher*.

The cities of Bergen and Kristiansand fell after brief firefights. Trondheim was also taken without difficulty. At Narvik, 600 miles to the north,

German destroyers landed elite mountain troops who easily seized the port. After one day, the Germans held Norway's key towns, but the garrisons were isolated and under-supplied. Much depended on the Allied response at sea.

## Tracer bullets

That response, when it came, was devastating. Allied submarines were first on the scene. They wrought havoc on German transport ships along the Norwegian coast, and also sank the cruiser *Karlsruhe* and seriously damaged the pocket battleship *Lutzuw*. They were followed by Fleet Air Arm Skua dive-bombers, which sank the cruiser *Königsberg* in Bergen harbour, history's first sinking of a major surface ship by air attack.

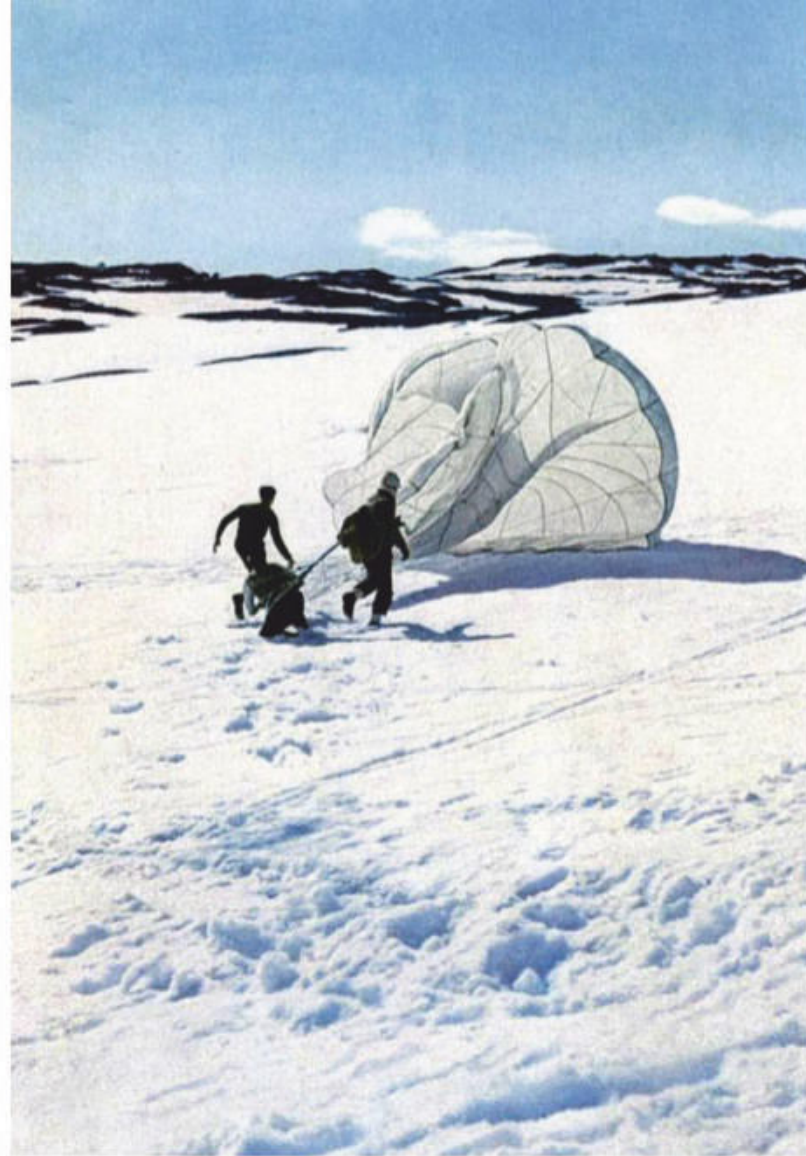
"The tracer bullets were drifting up towards us like lazy golden raindrops," wrote Skua pilot Captain RT Partridge. "Now, 2,500 feet, no fear or apprehension, just complete and absolute concentration; mustn't drop too high and must watch going too low and blowing myself up with my own bomb blast... at 1,800 feet I dropped my bombs and was away towards the sea at nought feet. My observer reported a near miss on the ship's port bow."

At Narvik, the German destroyers were stranded through lack of fuel, and the Royal Navy responded immediately and violently. Captain Bernard Warburton-Lee's 2nd Destroyer Flotilla entered Narvik fjord on 10 April, sinking two destroyers, damaging three more, and sinking seven stores ships.

Warburton-Lee's action provided more evidence of British naval superiority, but it ended in disaster. While racing for safety, the British flotilla was ambushed and, in a short, bloody engagement, the Germans sank two British destroyers, including Warburton-Lee's flagship HMS *Hardy*, which was driven ashore in flames. Warburton-Lee was killed; he later received a posthumous Victoria Cross. Leading Seaman Mason witnessed his last moments: "They had the captain lashed on a stretcher, lowering him feet first, and

**At Narvik, the Royal Navy responded immediately and violently, sinking two German destroyers, damaging three more and sinking seven store ships**





#### **All-out attack**

German mountain troops board a transport ship bound for Norway on 8 April 1940, and paratroops land near Oslo. Operation Weserübung – the German invasion of Denmark and Norway – was a simultaneous ground, air and sea assault



#### **Line of fire**

Wehrmacht troops battle for the village of Haugsbygd, north of Oslo, on 14 April 1940. German forces swiftly overran Denmark and seized Norway's capital



## TIMELINE NORWAY, 1940: How Hitler lost the edge at sea



The German supply ship *Altmark*, which was illegally carrying 300 prisoners through neutral waters



German troops approach Narvik in dinghies as they commence Operation Weserübung



A French propaganda poster in support of Norway from May 1940

**16 February 1940**

Naval forces from HMS *Cossack* free British prisoners held aboard German supply ship *Altmark* in Norwegian waters.

**8 April**

Polish submarine *Orzeł* sinks clandestine German troop transport *Rio de Janeiro*. HMS *Glowworm* sunk by German cruiser *Admiral Hipper*.

**9 April**

Operation Weserübung. German forces invade Norway and Denmark, overrunning Denmark in hours and seizing the Norwegian capital, Oslo, and five major ports.

**10 April**

First naval battle of Narvik. Two German destroyers and seven supply ships sunk, along with two British destroyers. Fleet Air Arm air strike sinks German cruiser *Königsberg* at Bergen.

**11 April**

British submarine *Spearfish* torpedoes German pocket battleship *Lützow*.

**13 April**

The second naval battle of Narvik. The remaining eight German destroyers and *U-64* are sunk.

**14-19 April**

British and Allied troops land at Namsos and Åndalsnes, near Trondheim, in central Norway, and at Harstad, near Narvik.

**3 May**

The withdrawal of Allied troops from central Norway is completed.

**13 May**

An Allied ground attack on Narvik begins with an amphibious landing at Bjerkvik.

**28 May**

French and Norwegian troops recapture Narvik.

**8 June**

As German forces sweep through France, Allied troops are evacuated from Narvik. Aircraft carrier HMS *Glorious* is sunk by *Scharnhorst* and *Gneisenau*. *Scharnhorst* is torpedoed.

**10 June 1940**

Norway surrenders to German forces. The Nazis will control Norway until May 1945.

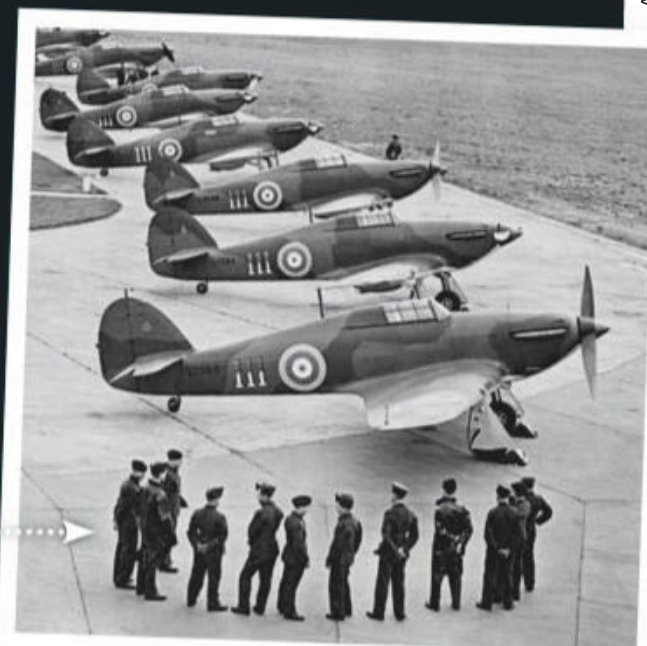
**10 June - 31 October 1940**

The Royal Air Force triumphs over the Luftwaffe in the Battle of Britain.

The last moments of HMS *Glowworm*, as seen from the German cruiser *Admiral Hipper*

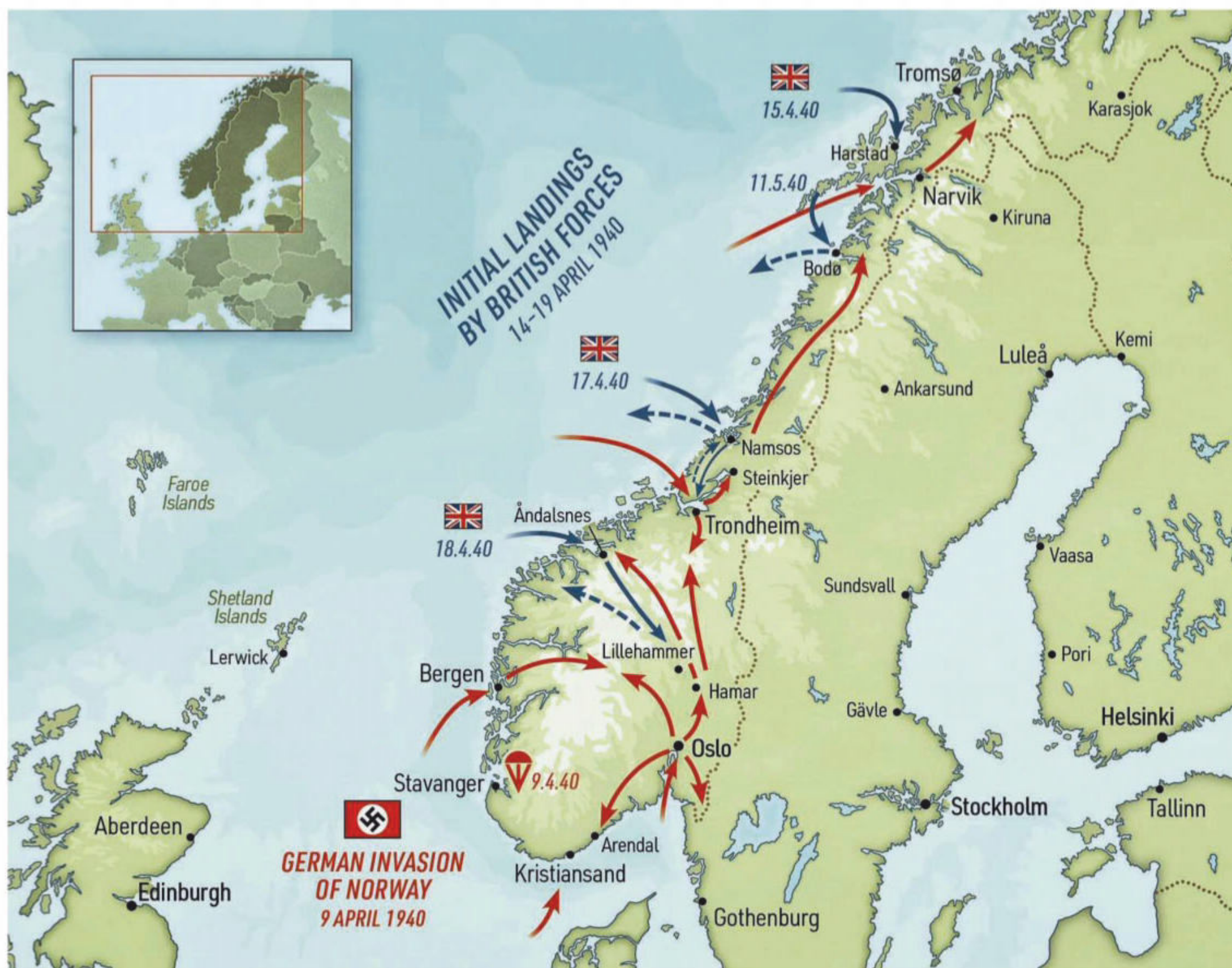


British troops are evacuated from Namsos, central Norway, in May 1940



British Hurricane pilots await a German bomber attack during the Battle of Britain





Our map shows the battle of Norway, fought between Allied and German forces from April to June 1940

wanted me to grab him and lay him on the deck. As he came down I saw that his head and face were in a terrible state; he was groaning and breathing heavily... the officers dumped the skipper in the water and dived in after him. He was dead when they got him to the beach."

Early on 13 April, the British battleship *Warspite*, with nine destroyers, arrived to wreak more havoc – *Warspite*'s float plane almost immediately sank the German submarine *U-64*. The day did not improve for the Germans, who were unable to either fight or flee due to their lack of fuel and ammunition, as the British sank or drove ashore all the surviving destroyers, leaving the German mountain troops isolated and vulnerable.

But for all their successes in the waters around Norway, the Allies couldn't prevent German ground forces advancing north from Oslo. The Allied high command was under pressure to respond, but was unsure whether to retake Trondheim or go for Narvik. Eventually, it made the questionable decision to undertake both operations simultaneously.

The Trondheim force landed at two small ports to the north and south of the city on 17 April and advanced inland, but both forces were poorly organised and equipped, and had almost no air cover. John Hodgson of the 49th West Riding Division recalled how "we did not see any German soldiers, but saw plenty of German planes which bombed and strafed us throughout the long hours of daylight".

Pushed steadily backwards and under round-the-clock aerial bombardment by Luftwaffe aircraft operating out of Denmark and southern Norway, the troops were evacuated after just two weeks.

The Allies now focused their efforts on Narvik alone, launching an assault on the town on 12 May. Under sustained pressure from British, French and Polish forces, Narvik fell on the 28th, the Germans withdrawing east towards the Swedish frontier.

But, with German armies sweeping through France, the victory at Narvik was irrelevant. Given that Allied forces were crumbling in the west, keeping more than 24,000 troops in Norway would have been ridiculous. And so, once more, the decision was taken to evacuate.

By 6 June, troopships had taken off 15,000

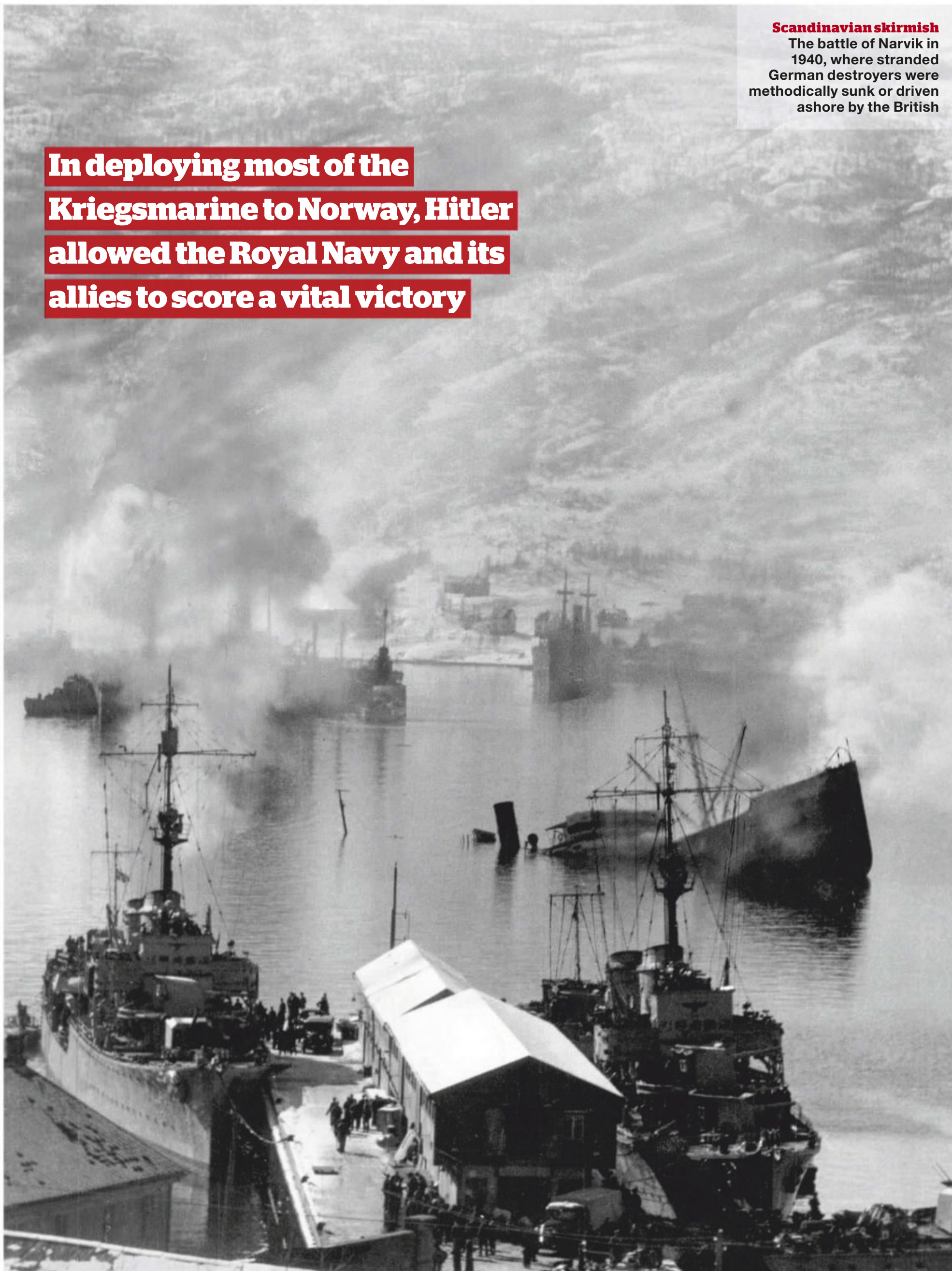
**British, Polish and French forces advanced and Narvik fell on the 28th – but with the Germans sweeping through France, victory was irrelevant**



### Scandinavian skirmish

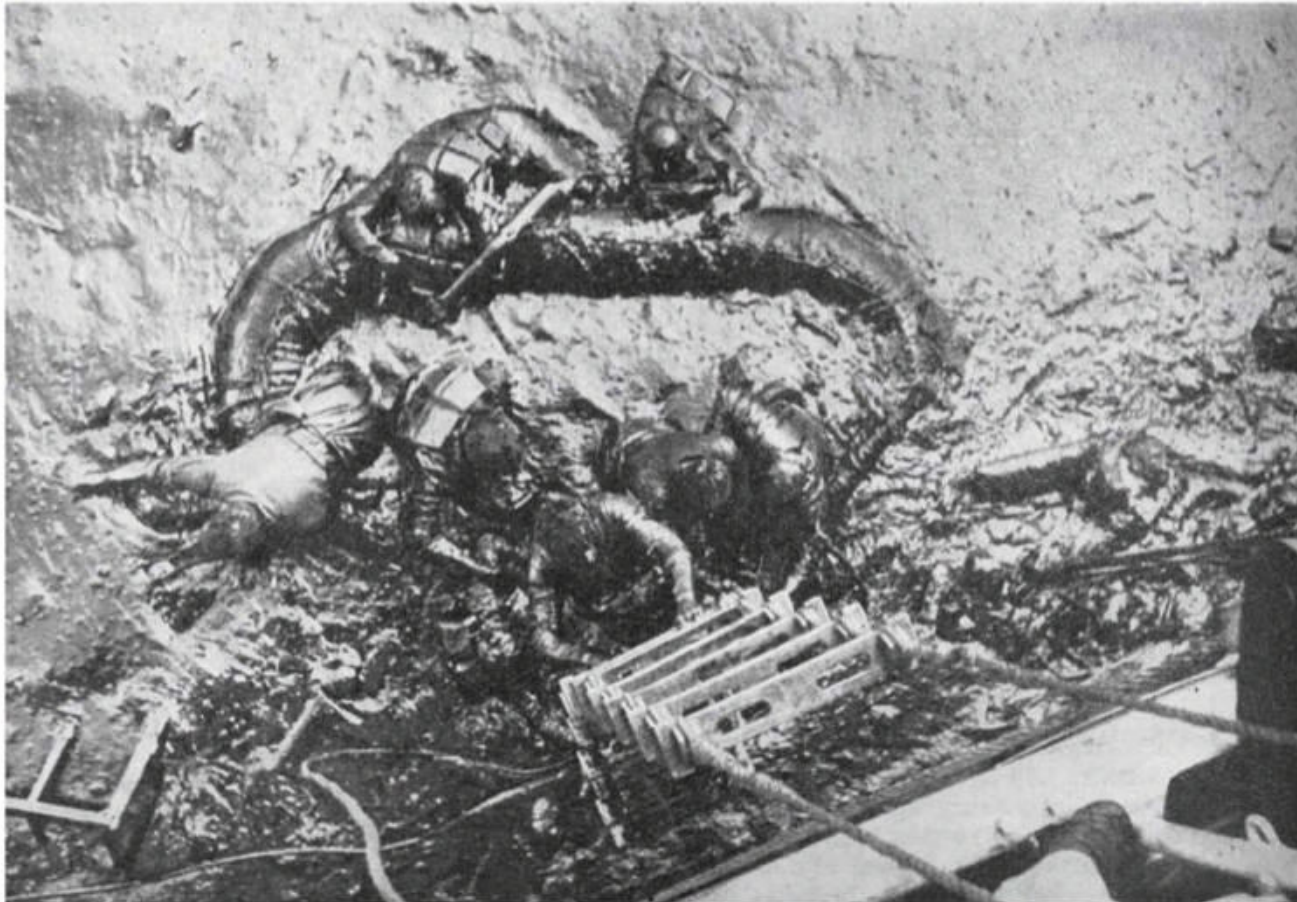
The battle of Narvik in 1940, where stranded German destroyers were methodically sunk or driven ashore by the British

**In deploying most of the  
Kriegsmarine to Norway, Hitler  
allowed the Royal Navy and its  
allies to score a vital victory**



BRIDGEMAN





**Surface action** Oil-covered British survivors are hauled out of the water after their ship, HMS *Glowworm*, was sunk by the cruiser *Admiral Hipper*, with heavy loss of life. In its final moments, the *Glowworm* rammed its aggressor, causing significant damage

troops, and the first group was on its way home. The following day, HMS *Devonshire* evacuated Norway's government and king from Tromsø, further north. Finally, on the 8th, the RAF contingent left, the pilots skilfully landing their aircraft on HMS *Glorious*, despite being entirely untrained in deck landings, and the carrier headed home. It never made it. Its deck cluttered with RAF fighters, *Glorious* was almost defenceless, and on being found by *Scharnhorst* and *Gneisenau*, was sunk with the loss of around 1,500 lives.

### Britain's vital victory

The sinking of the *Glorious* was the final act of the battle of Norway – and a grim one for all that. But it couldn't mask what was obvious to everyone – the battle had been a chastening experience for the Kriegsmarine. In deploying most of his navy to Norway, Adolf Hitler allowed the Royal Navy and its allies to score a vital victory.

Admiral Raeder, with Hitler's blessing, had planned for a war in 1946, writing later that the tiny fleet was so ill-prepared in 1939 that "it could do little more than show that it knew how to die valiantly". In Norway, it was eviscerated – its only two modern capital ships, *Scharnhorst* and *Gneisenau*, were torpedoed, and the pocket battleship *Lützow* seriously damaged, leaving her sister *Admiral Scheer* as Germany's only big-gun ship.

The rewards for Great Britain were immediately apparent, first during the evacuation from Dunkirk, which the Kriegsmarine failed to impede, and then when naval weakness became perhaps the single determining factor undermining

proposals for the invasion of England.

When the German army proposed a broad invasion front stretching from Lyme Bay in the west to Ramsgate in the east, the Kriegsmarine rejected it, arguing that it could only defend the invasion fleet if it was restricted to a narrow front, and the shortest possible route, across the Strait of Dover. Even then, strong coastal gun batteries and control of the air were a prerequisite, and for all the hyperbole, the evidence indicates that the Luftwaffe alone could not have hoped to defeat the Royal Navy in 1940.

The Royal Navy's defining purpose was to defend the United Kingdom, alongside which all other tasks paled into insignificance. To do this, at the start of the war it boasted 15 battleships, seven aircraft carriers, 66 cruisers, 184 destroyers and 60 submarines, with more under construction. Despite serious losses sustained in Norway and elsewhere, much of this force remained intact – the British could simply endure far higher losses than the Germans.

Even if the most modern ships were initially kept out of range of the Luftwaffe in the event of a German invasion after an RAF defeat in the Battle of Britain, this would still have left hundreds of 1914–18 vintage warships, which could have been thrown into the defence. And even if the Luftwaffe had sunk half of them, enough would have survived to massacre the motley array of improvised ferries and converted Rhine barges in which the Germans hoped to cross the Channel (especially at night, when German dive-bombers could not operate). Furthermore, evidence suggests that the Luftwaffe would



**Spent force** German pilots in northern France. The Luftwaffe alone couldn't have destroyed the Royal Navy during an invasion of Britain, argues Nick Hewitt

have struggled to achieve this ambitious level of destruction.

German bomber crews had been trained to act as precision flying artillery to support the army. Sinking ships that were manoeuvring fast in open water was a different skill, particularly if they were shooting back, and it was a skill the Luftwaffe had not mastered in 1940. To take just one example: on the first day of the Norway invasion, nearly 100 German bombers attacked five British cruisers and seven destroyers steaming without air cover. They sank just one destroyer, HMS *Gurkha*, after she became detached from the main force. Based on this and similar incidents, it is, I believe, without question that enough British warships would have survived to destroy the invasion force, regardless of whether the Germans controlled the air.

Admiral Raeder confirmed this on 19 July, when he wrote to Hitler explaining that: "The task allotted to the navy [in the invasion] is out of all proportion to the navy's strength." In doing so he was effectively admitting that, during April and May 1940, the Royal Navy had saved Britain. ■

Nick Hewitt has an MA in war studies from King's College, University of London, and is head of exhibitions and collections at the National Museum of the Royal Navy

### DISCOVER MORE

#### WEBSITE

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# Kings and Queens

## St Anne's College, Oxford 2-3 March 2019

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# Weekend

**BBC**  
**HiSTORY**  
MAGAZINE

## Saturday 2 March

Robert  
Hutchinson

### Henry VIII: The Decline and Fall of a Tyrant



**Saturday**

10.15–11.15

Henry VIII has been defined more by his six marriages than

who he truly was. In this talk, author and historian Robert Hutchinson will focus on the epic tragedy of the Tudor monarch's last seven years, revealing a lonely, vulnerable king, thwarted in his ambitions.

Catherine  
Hanley

### Matilda: The Greatest King England Never Had



**Saturday**

11.45–12.45

When Henry I died in 1135, he left the English crown to his eldest

legitimate child. It should have been the easiest succession imaginable, but it wasn't – because Henry's heir was not a son but a daughter. In her talk, medieval historian Catherine Hanley will introduce Matilda and examine her campaign to claim the throne.

Laura  
Ashe

### Richard II: The Boy Who Never Grew Up



**Saturday**

13.45–14.45

Richard II came to the throne as a child and the chaotic events

of his faltering reign expose his own personal weaknesses, and the profound difficulties thrown up by government shaped around personalities. In her talk, Professor Laura Ashe will revisit the turbulent years of the late 14th century.

Miles  
Taylor

### Victoria, Queen of England, and Empress of India



**Saturday**

15.15–16.15

As Empress of India, Queen Victoria was never a token ruler and

Indian politics and society were fundamentally reshaped by her influence from afar. In this illustrated lecture, Professor Miles Taylor will talk about the significant impact India had on the queen as well as the pivotal role she played in India.

Susan  
Doran

### Did Elizabeth's Gender Really Matter?



**Saturday**

16.45–17.45

In her talk on the iconic Tudor queen, Professor Susan Doran

will explore how attitudes towards Elizabeth's gender changed over the 20th century. She also asks, how much did the fact that Elizabeth was a queen, and not a king, really affect her reign?

Nathen  
Amin

### Henry VII and the Pretenders to the Tudor Crown



**Saturday**

18.30–19.30

For the first decade of his reign, Henry VII was plagued by a

pair of pretenders who sought to seize his hard-won crown: Lambert Simnel and Perkin Warbeck. In this talk, author and historian Nathen Amin examines how Henry faced down these threats and established the Tudor dynasty.

## Sunday 3 March

Anne  
Curry

### Henry V: A Life of Transformations



**Sunday**

10.15–11.15

It's easy to dismiss Henry V as a warrior king who had the

misfortune to die young. But he was a truly complex person, who transformed himself from a wayward prince into a serious-minded if not obsessive king. In her talk, Professor Anne Curry will delve into this transformation and how it shaped Henry's kingship and his wars.

Clare  
Jackson

### Charles II, Scotland and Newmarket



**Sunday**

11.45–12.45

Clare Jackson, author of the Penguin Monarchs biography of

Charles II, chronicles the Merrie Monarch's rollercoaster of a life – from his flight from parliamentary forces to his triumphant Restoration. She also considers the difficulties she encountered writing a new life of this colourful king.

Piers  
Brendon

### Edward VIII: The Uncrowned King



**Sunday**

13.45–14.45

Edward VIII biographer Piers Brendon will trace the king's

tumultuous private and public life, from playboy prince to troubled sovereign. He will focus especially on the abdication crisis (including Edward's relationship with Winston Churchill) and estimate its impact on the institution of monarchy in the 20th century.

Michael  
Penman

### Robert Bruce of Scotland: Myth and Aftermyth



**Sunday**

15.15–16.15

Dr Michael Penman avoids the familiar narrative of Robert

Bruce's life. Instead, he considers whether the story of the Scottish king's military triumphs over the English was a heroic past created by Bruce himself – as well as by generations of Scots.

Tom  
Holland

### Æthelstan: The Founding Father of England



**Sunday**

16.45–17.45

There was nothing inevitable about the emergence of England as a

unitary kingdom. The achievements of Æthelstan as conqueror, legislator and patron of learning laid foundations that today the English tend to take for granted. Popular historian Tom Holland will tell a thrilling and remarkable story that deserves to be much better known.

Join us  
for a  
weekend in  
Oxford



Olivia Colman as Queen Anne in Yorgos Lanthimos's *The Favourite*. Anne's reign saw women take centre stage in fierce political debates

# *When women called the shots*

For a few years during the reign of Queen Anne, women dominated the political arena – from biting satirists to MPs' powerful wives.

**Hannah Greig**, historical advisor on a new film about Anne's turbulent inner circle, celebrates a golden age of female influence





PHOTO BY ATSUSHI NISHIJIMA © 2018 TWENTIETH CENTURY FOX FILM CORPORATION



## Queen Anne's court

“M ay I remind you, you are *not* the queen!” When Robert Harley utters these words to Sarah Churchill in one

of the most memorable scenes in Yorgos Lanthimos's new film *The Favourite*, he is undoubtedly right: Churchill is not the queen. But, as Harley has just discovered to his cost, she might as well be.

Harley (played by Nicholas Hoult), a leading Tory minister, has come to court seeking an audience with the real monarch, Anne. Instead, he is confronted by Churchill – a supporter of the Tories' enemies, the Whigs – who has used all her power to stop that meeting going ahead. With his attempts to gain the queen's ear blocked, Harley is forced to retreat in an impotent rage.

Set in the English court at the dawn of the 18th century, *The Favourite* explores the shifting balance of power between Queen Anne (played by Olivia Colman) and her two most influential courtiers: Abigail Masham (Emma Stone) and the indomitable Sarah Churchill, Duchess of Marlborough (Rachel Weisz). As the duchess's clash with Harley suggests, the court, seen through Lanthimos's eye at least, is a world controlled by female power. Women are at the heart of the drama, exploiting messy, sexualised and often darkly manipulative personal relationships that intersect with the mechanics of state power. The excessively bewigged men are ignored, overruled or, at best, required to coax the women to drop them some patronage.

But is this interpretation of events anchored in reality? Did women truly hold the whip hand? Given that *The Favourite* features lobster racing, fire breathing and the pelting of a plump, naked courtier with pomegranates, it's tempting to dismiss it as two hours of overblown make-believe. Yet that is to do the film a disservice. In its scrutiny of early 18th-century matriarchal politics – an era in which women at court exercised unparalleled influence and political power – *The Favourite* is closer to the truth than you might think.

### Great controversy

“The nation is particularly jealous of favourites,” declared the author Daniel Defoe, as he watched the politics of Queen Anne's court unfold before him. And it would be two



Queen Anne, based on a work by Sir Godfrey Kneller, c1702–10. Anne granted the highest positions at court to her childhood friend Sarah Churchill

favourites – both of them women – who would define the trajectory of the queen's reign, and embroil it in one of its greatest controversies.

When Anne succeeded to the throne in 1702, Sarah Churchill, a charismatic companion and close confidante since girlhood, was in the ascendant. To bridge the status gap between gentlewoman and royal, as young women Anne and Sarah had adopted the informal aliases of Mrs Morley (Anne) and Mrs Freeman (Sarah), retaining the nicknames for decades, until their friendship soured.

Thanks to Anne's close patronage, Sarah Churchill and her army officer husband, John (hero of the battle of Blenheim), were rapidly promoted through the peerage, emerging as the Duke and Duchess of Marlborough, a power-broking couple aspiring to command of court,

Branded a ‘she-dictator’, the Duchess of Marlborough was **driven by a powerful political conviction**

military and state. As queen, Anne awarded the duchess the highest positions available to a woman at court: mistress of the robes, groom of the stole, keeper of the privy purse and ranger of Windsor Great Park. Together these put the duchess in charge of the monarch's property, person and finances, but her ambitions extended further still.

Characterised by Defoe as a “she-dictator”, the duchess was driven by a passion for government and a powerful political conviction. Partisan feeling ran high during Anne's reign, with two broad political factions – the Whigs and the Tories – vying for influence over a monarch who had the power to hire and fire governments and veto policies. The Duchess of Marlborough was a dyed-in-the-wool Whig, and endeavoured to use her influence with the queen to secure appointments for Whig men and their families at court, to facilitate or thwart ministerial

Sarah Churchill, the Duchess of Marlborough (left) and Abigail Masham, who emerged as a bitter rival for the queen's affections







Peter Tillemans' depiction of Queen Anne in the House of Lords, painted between 1708 and 1714, shows Anne and a coterie of female companions watching the house in session before them



## Queen Anne's court

access to the monarch, and to inveigle the queen to support the Whig desire for England to remain an active participant in the War of the Spanish Succession.

But the duchess had a problem. The queen was no puppet, and the role of court favourite was not a lifelong sinecure. Soon, disputes over politics and matters of states began to drive a wedge between Mrs Morley and Mrs Freeman – and these were exacerbated by the emergence of a new contender as court favourite, Abigail Masham (née Hill).

Masham had come to court under the Duchess of Marlborough's patronage, but ultimately usurped her as the one who, in the words of the Duke of Shrewsbury, "could make the queen stand upon her head if she chose". Masham proved a political as well as a personal rival to the duchess. She was a key confidante of Tory minister Robert Harley, who used her close relationship with the queen to further his own goals. Despite the length of her friendship with Queen Anne, the Duchess of Marlborough was frozen out. In 1711, the queen stripped Sarah of all her official roles, and in turn the duchess stripped her court apartments clean of all fixtures and fittings on her way out.

### Political trailblazers

The controversial soap opera that was Anne, Churchill and Masham's relationship fascinated contemporaries, and has intrigued historians ever since. Yet they were not the only female political players of the age, and nor was the court the only arena in which women made a significant impact. This was a period of remarkable political journalism, and the animosity between Marlborough and Masham was scrutinised, fanned and spun across all forms of print media. Many of those penning political commentary – and being paid for it – were women. Mary Astell, the 'first English feminist', wrote advice books advocating women's right to education and disavowing the tyranny of marriage – all laced with polemics in support of the Tory party.

Astell was certainly not the only female critic of the Whigs. The sharpened quill of the 'first female political journalist', Delarivier Manley, impaled the Duchess of Marlborough, her husband and leading Whig ministers with a prolific output of

**The third edition of Mary Astell's *A Serious Proposal* (1696), which pressed for women to have better educational and career opportunities**



Nicholas Hoult (right) as Tory minister Robert Harley in *The Favourite*. The real Harley paid the brilliant female satirist Delarivier Manley to attack the Whigs in print

*The Spectator* warned women that **getting caught up in politics jeopardised** their delicate beauty

satirical novels, political essays and pamphlets. At times taking pay from Lord Harley and working to commission, Manley was an effective political propagandist, her influence confirmed by the rage she elicited among the Whigs.

The work of playwright Susanna Centlivre was of a different political hue, coloured with support for the Whigs, as expressed in plays such as 1709's *The Man's Bewitch'd*, in which the heroine liberates herself from the tyranny of a Tory guardian and finds happiness with a handsome Whig hero.

But women didn't just seek to shape political opinion via the written word. Others chose a more personal approach, using their influence as wives, sisters and daughters of ministers or go-getting MPs to befriend,

win over and persuade. One of the best exponents of this tactic was Anne, Countess of Strafford, who spent months in London trailing from townhouse to townhouse, firming up acquaintances and trading inside political news. Chief among her targets were Lady North and Grey (whose husband was an opponent of the Duke of Marlborough in the House of Lords), the Duchess of Somerset (who replaced the Duchess of Marlborough as groom of the stole), and Abigail Masham.

The Countess of Stafford was particularly pleased to receive an invitation to assemblies hosted by the Duchess of Shrewsbury, often used by Lord Harley's Tory supporters as a gathering point outside court. Shrewsbury's success as a political hostess is implied by her enemies' haughty disdain – the Duchess of Marlborough simply couldn't resist a dig, mocking Shrewsbury for "thrusting out her disagreeable breasts in such strange motions".

The Countess of Stafford's centre of operations was her St James's Square home. A few doors away, another peeress – Lady Hervey, later Countess of Bristol – was similarly engaged in winning over a network of elite women to a political cause. However, her targets were Whigs, not Tories.

Hervey cosied up to the Duchess of Marlborough and her daughters (most shrewdly married off to Whig aristocrats), sitting beside them at the theatre and attending their balls, as well as those hosted by other high-ranking Whig wives, such as Lady Wharton and Lady Portland.

Such politicking didn't go unnoticed in the



press – and not all male correspondents were impressed by what they saw. Commenting on the growing number of women wielding political influence, *The Spectator* warned that “Party-rage” was a “male vice”, and women caught up in “party-zeal” jeopardised their delicate beauty. “There is nothing so bad for the face as party-zeal. It gives an ill-natured cast to the eye, and disagreeable sourness to the look; besides that it makes the lines too strong, and flushes them worse than brandy [...] I have never known a party-woman keep her beauty for a twelvemonth.”

## Movers and shakers

Even if women bought the lie that politics ruined their looks, they clearly deemed it a price worth paying. With a queen as head of state, the early 1700s were especially conducive to female political debate and activity, but it was far from an anomaly. The kind of political engagement found in the century’s opening decades has also been located at its close, where the Whigs found another indomitable female mover and shaker in Georgiana, Duchess of Devonshire. And around such high-profile women were many more, discussing, writing, campaigning, petitioning and participating in the rich discourses of the day.

At press junkets, Yorgos Lanthimos has been fielding questions about the extent to which *The Favourite* can be regarded as part of the #MeToo and #TimesUp movements, as if the female politics on the screen must be modern gender politics in fancy dress. Yet the film, as Lanthimos has made clear, was in development long before these recent campaigns, and of course the story itself is far older. We seem to struggle to recognise the longevity of female political participation – its opportunities as well as its limits. Hopefully, through Lanthimos’s wide-angle lens, trailblazers such as Mary Astell, Delarivier Manley and Lady Hervey will begin to get the recognition they deserve. **H**

**Hannah Greig** is a senior lecturer in early modern history at the University of York. She was a historical advisor on *The Favourite*, which is out in UK cinemas this month

### DISCOVER MORE

#### WEBSITE

► To find out more about the real history behind the new film **The Favourite**, read Hannah Greig’s article on our website at [historyextra.com/the-favourite](http://historyextra.com/the-favourite)

#### ON THE PODCAST

► Listen to Hannah Greig discuss Queen Anne and **The Favourite** on our podcast: [historyextra.com/podcast](http://historyextra.com/podcast)

# Gender politics

Five women who challenged the Westminster boys’ club in the 18th century

## The mother of Great Britain

### Queen Anne

Anne (1665–1714) is remembered as an ineffective monarch, one beset by illness and shyness and dependent on court favourites. More recent biographies have revised that view, recognising the flourishing of culture during her reign, as well as the important constitutional and political moments she oversaw – not least of which was the 1707 Acts of Union, aligning the kingdoms of England and Scotland in a single sovereign state, Great Britain.



## The ‘she-dictator’

### Sarah Churchill, Duchess of Marlborough

Born into Hertfordshire gentry, Churchill (1660–1744) found her way to power through a childhood friendship with the future Queen Anne, and marriage to John Churchill, who would become a military hero. Emerging as Duke and Duchess of Marlborough, they had extraordinary political influence. After she lost her posts at court, Sarah retained a foothold in Whig politics as the matriarch of an expansive family, who were smoothly matched off to aristocrats, MPs and ministers.



## The shadowy ‘insinuator’

### Elizabeth Seymour, Duchess of Somerset

Somerset (1667–1722) was a powerful player in the politics of Anne’s court. Jonathan Swift warned that behind her courtly manners lay “a most insinuating woman”, and she was regarded by many as a behind-the-scenes protagonist who helped bring down the Marlboroughs. She was made lady of the bedchamber in 1702. Despite the rise of Abigail Masham, it was Somerset who replaced Marlborough in the key position of groom of the stole.



## The power broker

### Elizabeth Hervey, Countess of Bristol

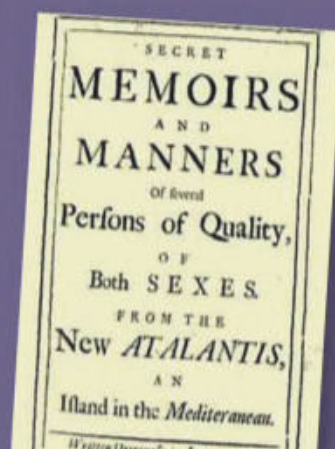
Seventeen children and a husband who preferred horse races at Newmarket to Westminster debates did not stop Hervey (1676–1741) making her mark in politics. She courted the Marlboroughs and the queen to find court posts and empty parliamentary seats for her brood. She and her MP husband were elevated to the peerage, first as baron and lady in 1703 and then earl and countess in 1714, and produced a dynasty of often eccentric Whig MPs and courtiers.



## The devastating satirist

### Delarivier Manley

Often described as the first political journalist, Manley (c1670–1724) was a writer who wielded her pen as a weapon in the early 1700s. Her 1709 novel *New Atalantis* (shown right) satirised contemporary debate with devastating attacks on Whig politicians. It led to her arrest for libel, but she argued her work was a fiction – making it impossible for her victims to punish her, since they would have proven themselves the ugly characters she portrayed.





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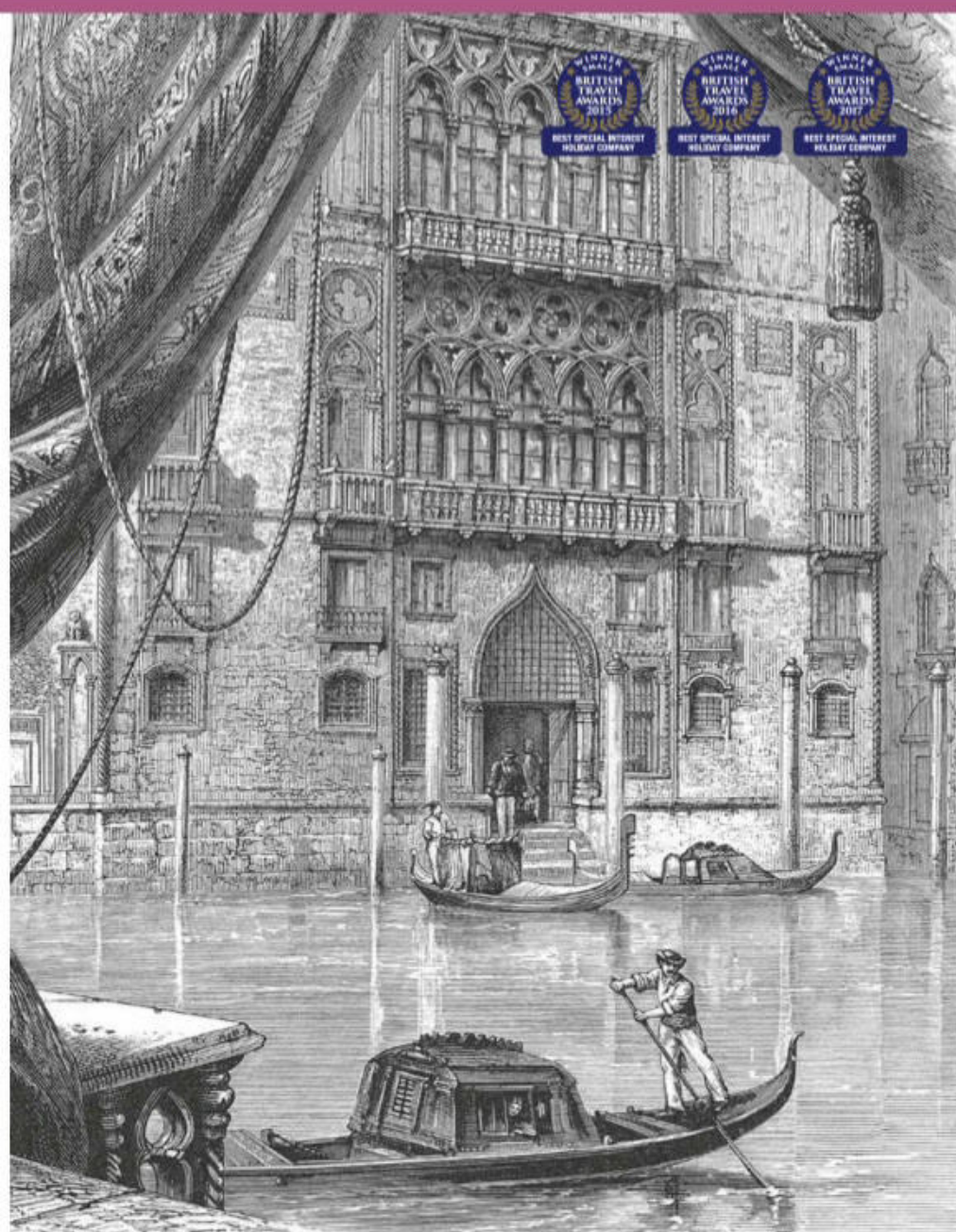
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Paul Morland, photographed in London. "It's very hard to think of aspects of life that are not impacted by demography in one way or another," he says

Photography by Fran Monks



## INTERVIEW / PAUL MORLAND

*"Even the Spanish flu pandemic wasn't enough to stop population growth"*

*Paul Morland talks to Ellie Cawthorne about his new book on how demographic change has shaped global history, and is set to shape our future too*



## PROFILE PAUL MORLAND

Dr Paul Morland is an associate research fellow at Birkbeck College, University of London, specialising in demography. He is the author of *Demographic Engineering: Population Strategies in Ethnic Conflict* (Routledge, 2014). His new book, *The Human Tide*, is his first title intended for a non-academic audience.

### What exactly is 'demography', and why do you think it is an enlightening way to look at history?

In some ways demography is quite simple, and that's part of its appeal. It's essentially about three things: the people entering the world, the people leaving it and the people moving across it – births, deaths and migration. So why does it have such an impact? Because the number of people in any given area, and the age and ethnic composition of that population, affect an area's politics, economics, society and culture. In fact, it's very hard to think of aspects of life that are not impacted by demography in one way or another.

### Your book looks at population trends over the last 200 years. What have been the biggest changes in that time?

Throughout human history there's always been population growth and decline, but before the 19th century things were rather random. Around 1800, however, a pattern started emerging, which sees death rates falling while fertility rates stay high, meaning that a population grows until eventually the birth rate falls and the population stabilises. Why did this happen? Modernity. When you start to get basic public health measures and education on how to implement them, death rates fall very quickly. This pattern began in Britain, and then spread across Europe and the world.

### How did this pattern affect the balance of global power?

It's very important that the first population explosion happened in Britain. Britain had a number of environmental, cultural and institutional advantages that meant it was the first significantly-sized country to go through modernisation. In the 19th century, Britons became better educated, better housed, better fed and were more likely to get basic medical care. This meant they experienced an early fall in death rates, so the population ballooned. Without its first-mover advantage, Britain could never have become 'the workshop of the world' – the industrial revolution couldn't have kept its momentum up without a large and growing population. This early population boom also essentially led to the British empire, with a huge movement of people from the British Isles to far flung parts of

the globe. The world we know today, full of English-speaking countries, is the product of that rollercoaster of Anglo demography – population explosion and mass emigration, which then spread across Europe.

Today, of course, the migration is the other way around. At several points in the 21st century, we've seen hundreds of thousands of people a year move to the UK. Similarly, if you told somebody in France in 1900 that by 2018 we would have huge Algerian populations in Paris and Marseille, and no French populations in Algiers, they would have been absolutely astonished.

### Tell us about the connection between population and war.

On a very basic level, the number of fighters you can throw onto the battlefield is hugely significant. If you look at the battles on the First World War's western front, it was a grinding competition of pouring ever more men into the trenches. When the quality of the soldiers' training and armaments was broadly similar, numbers mattered enormously. That gave the Allies an edge, and when America entered the war it was the final straw. You could say that the First World War was determined in the cradles of the 1880s and 1890s.

But it's more complex than a pure numbers game. The age of a population is another factor: young populations can result in a lot of conflict, violence and fanaticism. It's certainly true that if Syria (which has a median age of 20) had a population the age of Switzerland (where it's well over 40), things would have turned out differently there. When you get to a certain age, you have interests: you're more likely to be married with children and have more of an economic stake in society. Something you almost exclusively find is that when a population gets old, it has less crime, violence and civil strife.

There is also some evidence to support the

*A young population is more likely to result in conflict, violence and fanaticism*

argument that as family sizes decrease, parents value their children more intensely. Families with one son are less willing to send him off to fight than a family with four sons. However, my sister has four sons, and I imagine she would disagree with that!

### You suggest that populations can be remarkably resilient...

I don't mean this to sound heartless or cruel, as I do recognise that every life is valuable. But yes, these big cataclysmic events don't actually have as much impact as you might think. For example, the First World War and the 1918 Spanish flu pandemic: these did slow population growth in Europe, but even the millions of deaths they caused weren't enough to stop that growth entirely.

A current example would be Syria. Syria's population is about 20 million, and the country has lost around half a million in war casualties (not including people who have emigrated). Just in raw numbers, those losses could be recuperated in a very small space of time. Syria could see its population growing at 2 or even 3 per cent a year.

### What is the most important factor in population change?

For me, it has to be birth rates. Where contraception and education are available, and women have a choice, it's a given that they have smaller families. Outside sub-Saharan Africa, there's barely a country in the world where women have more than four children now. The fall in fertility rates across the globe in recent times is staggering. What I call the 'infertile crescent' now stretches from Spain to Singapore. One statistic that floors me is that between 1970 and 1980, China's birth rate fell from 6 to 3 in a decade, and that was before the one-child policy was introduced. You simply can't get much faster falls in fertility than that. Decisions like how many children to have feel very personal, but the individual choices you make are shaped by big social forces. And what's fascinating is how different cultural, social and economic settings lead people to make different choices on aggregate.

### You talk about 'demographic engineering' - what does that involve?

Demographic engineering is when groups in conflict use demography in order to strengthen their hand against the other





US soldiers wear masks to prevent the spread of influenza as they prepare to leave for France, 1918. Spanish flu slowed but did not stop population growth

side. I talk about two types: hard and soft.

Hard demographic engineering is when you change a population through demographic factors themselves – attempting to manipulate birth rates, death rates or migration. In its most extreme form it could even include genocide. One example of hard demographic engineering would be Northern Ireland's Protestant establishment encouraging Catholics to emigrate in the 1960s and 1970s. This was a rather deliberate strategy to counter high Catholic birth rates and strengthen Protestant numbers. Another example would be the elevated birth rates of both Israelis and Palestinians when compared to similar groups – what could be termed 'competitive breeding', driven by a group's desire to reinforce their numbers in a time of conflict.

Soft demographic engineering is when you try and change a population through non-demographic means, such as redrawing boundaries or manipulating cultural or national identities. To take another example from Northern Ireland: when the state was founded, there was a decision to include six rather than nine counties, as those six counties constituted a much more sustainable Protestant-majority population. It was about defining the state in a way that favoured one group over another.

### What does the future hold?

I use the analogy of three colours: more grey, less white and more green.

Firstly: more grey. Almost every society on the planet is ageing. In many ways, an older

global population is a positive thing – it's definitely more peaceful. But it also raises lots of economic problems, such as a falling working-age population and rising health care costs.

Secondly: less white. The huge expansion in white populations we previously took for granted is now retreating, and historically majority-white countries are becoming much more diverse. Mass migration into Europe and America has changed the face of those continents, and identities will surely continue to shift in these nations over time. Towards the middle of the current century, the percentage of the US population that belongs to minority groups is expected to be more than 50 per cent, and that will surely have an impact. If you look at the ethnic makeup of Trump voters and his slim electoral victory, it's clear he would not have been elected if America was less white.

At the same time, Africa is about to have a huge population explosion – by 2100, there are very likely to be six or seven times as many Africans as Europeans. We're in the middle of a massive shift in the global balance. The world is set to become much more African, and it will be very interesting to see how that will affect things.

My last and perhaps most controversial prediction is: more green. The best UN data suggests that by the end of the century, population growth will be slowing towards zero. As the amount of additional agricultural output we need slows, coupled with rising agricultural productivity, there's an opportunity for nature to take back some

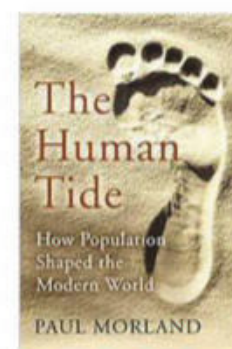
space. In countries with declining populations, such as Japan or Bulgaria, you can already find abandoned villages where wolves and bears are returning. So once we reach population stability, we could have a greener world as well.

### Should we feel hopeful then?

Having said all of this, you never know where things are going – there are always kinks in what we think the pattern is going to be. In 1798, Thomas Malthus described a world in which expanding populations would outstrip food supplies, and everyone would be living on the brink of starvation. But almost exactly as he was writing, the system he so beautifully described was collapsing and we started to see this amazing demographic transition emerge. Likewise, the postwar baby boom caught everyone by surprise. And now we're living in uncharted waters. Take the rise in acceptance of LGBT+ rights for example – it will be interesting to see what that will mean in terms of demography.

But who knows – we might get a population explosion we didn't see coming. Or we might all be wiped out by a meteor or plague.

Demography likes to play some funny tricks when you least expect it. **H**



**The Human Tide: How Population Shaped the Modern World** by Paul Morland (John Murray, 352 pages, £25)





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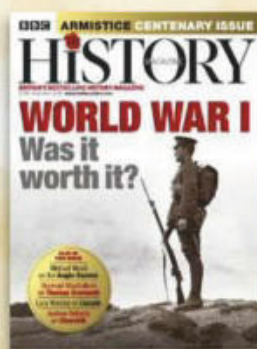
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Bess of Hardwick in a c1560s oil painting. A new book by Kate Hubbard examines her powerbroking and building projects

Bess's fourth husband, George Talbot, 6th Earl of Shrewsbury, was the queen's jailor, but also because Chatsworth, as Bess had seen it constructed, was the perfect combination of security and comfort: ideal for housing a rival claimant to the English throne. The house was designed to be at the cutting edge of architectural style, with long galleries for display, dozens of panelled rooms, an orchard, ponds and a third storey with a second set of state rooms. Bess's impressive stately home provided an extravagant prison indeed for a captive queen.

And Bess was more than a bystander in goings-on. It was while sharing needlework with Bess that Mary produced one of the most striking images associated with her: an embroidered panel showing a ginger cat toying with a grey mouse, a reflection perhaps of her relationship with her royal cousin Elizabeth. Mary also wrote a letter containing some of the gossip she had presumably gleaned from Bess: that Elizabeth was a nymphomaniac who had slept with much of her court, and that Bess and others laughed at the queen's appearance, so hideous no one could look her in the face.

The advantage of Hubbard's treatment of Bess is that it does not solely rely on her relationships with other notables, such as Mary, Queen of Scots or Elizabeth I, to demonstrate her importance to history. Instead, the focus is on Bess's own achievements, particularly in building, which set her above many of her contemporaries. Given the patriarchal system in which she lived, this is a great testament to her strength and tenacity. Bess was, as a contemporary put it, "humble in speech and stout in actions", and astute when it

***Bess is often in the background of historic moments, on the periphery of historians' attentions***

## Tudor powerhouse

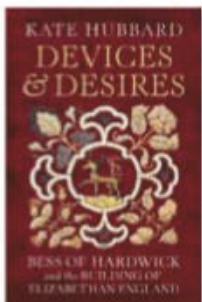
**JOANNE PAUL** recommends a dynamic biography of one of the Elizabethan age's most savvy and influential women



### Devices and Desires: Bess of Hardwick and the Building of Elizabethan England

By Kate Hubbard

Chatto & Windus, 384 pages, £20



In 1570, the imprisoned Mary, Queen of Scots came face to face with her greatest adversary. This was not her cousin Queen Elizabeth I, who stayed well away and was largely ambivalent about Mary's fate, but William Cecil, secretary of state, who was quite clear on his condemnation of the Scottish Catholic queen. The parties negotiated for two weeks, though their accords were never

acted upon, leaving Mary to stew and scheme for another 17 years before Cecil finally succeeded in removing her as a threat.

Kate Hubbard's *Devices and Desires* draws our attention to the setting for this historic meeting, Chatsworth House, and a figure in the background of the exchange: Elizabeth, Countess of Shrewsbury, better known to history as Bess of Hardwick. Bess, Hubbard shows, is rather like the buildings to which she dedicated so much of her energy and resources: often in the background of historic moments, on the periphery of many historians' attentions. And yet, her strong, influential character lends a subtle shaping to key events.

Mary was at Chatsworth because





COMING SOON...

"Next month we'll be speaking to Richard J Evans about the life and work of trailblazing historian Eric Hobsbawm. Plus, we'll have expert reviews of books on Anglo-Saxon women, the noxious history of poison, and supernatural beliefs in the First World War"

Ellie Cawthorne, staff writer

came to manipulating to her own advantage systems designed to oppress her. The great overarching story of *Devices and Desires* is the building-up of Bess's own sense of strength, purpose and independence: from teenaged bride and victimised young widow to defiant and purposeful businesswoman.

Like many popular histories, Hubbard's book could go further in attempting to avoid the well-worn tropes of historical writing. This is especially the case with some of the surrounding characters, such as Mary, Queen of Scots, who falls into the usual category of the "alluring" woman but "fatally bad decision maker", betrayed by her submission to the "swashbuckling"

***Bess was astute at manipulating to her own advantage the systems intended to oppress her***

Bothwell (who, it is casually mentioned, probably raped her).

Yet the book does succeed in painting a dynamic portrait of Bess's life, using letters and other sources to give it colour. The strongest moments come when Hubbard makes creative use of often-overlooked sources, such as lists of purchases, to flesh out Bess's daily life and surroundings, and how she sought to shape both. The fascinating relationship between Bess's biography and her building projects is also brought to the fore.

Bess of Hardwick emerges from *Devices and Desires* as a fascinating and influential woman well deserving of many historians' attention. By focusing on her as an innovative builder of some of Elizabethan England's most impressive homes, Hubbard presents a facet of Bess that she herself would have wanted remembered by posterity. **H**

Joanne Paul is lecturer in early modern history at the University of Sussex

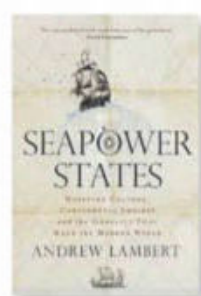
## Seafaring superpowers

**JERRY BROTTON** enjoys a wide-ranging voyage around mighty maritime states, from Athens to the British empire

### Seapower States: Maritime Culture, Continental Empires and the Conflict that Made the Modern World

By Andrew Lambert

Yale University Press, 424 pages, £20



The age of seaborne sail and steam may be over, but the period of premodern 'seapower states' was crucial in shaping our current moment of globalisation, driven as it is by cultural

interdependence yet characterised by conflicts over wealth and resources. Andrew Lambert's magisterial new book offers a provocative yet persuasive account of how five historical seapowers – Athens, Carthage, Venice, the Dutch republic and Britain – shaped our global social, economic and political identity.

Much has been written about seaborne empires, often romanticising their achievements. What distinguishes Lambert's clear-eyed assessment of seapower states is his argument that rather than just possessing powerful navies, their national and cultural life is defined by the sea. Paradoxically, "seapower states are not powerful; they focus on the sea because they are weak". Openness to different cultures and forms of exchange mean that they are defined by political inclusiveness. Their political organisation is republican, working in tandem with merchant communities

and defined in opposition to autocratic land-based empires.

Ancient Athens was the first city to become what Lambert calls a "sea state", successfully defining its naval seapower and democratic ideals in contrast to Persia during the Peloponnesian Wars. Carthage then inherited its inclusive, multicultural ideals until crushed by "Roman monoculture" in the Punic Wars. The early modern seapower states of first Venice, then the Dutch republic and finally the British empire all looked to Athens and Carthage as models of seaborne naval and commercial power. The account of British seapower is particularly fascinating, tracing how the country became an "oligarchic republic" in all but name in the late 17th century, and how the navy served the City's merchant class.

There is much to admire yet also debate in Lambert's wide-ranging analysis. He argues that autocratic land empires feared naval seapowers not for their strength at sea but for their "liberal, progressive and inclusive ideas", which defined classic western thinking from Plato to Ruskin. Brexit, he argues, could "represent a state that has recovered something of its seapower heritage by stepping away from a continentally focused organisation" like the EU. Meanwhile, the current US trajectory of economic protectionism and political isolationism threatens the vitality of the global economy, still reliant on

movement across oceanic space. The future, Lambert claims, has "always belonged to seapower". Only time will tell if he is right. **H**

Jerry Brotton is the author of *This Orient Isle: Elizabethan England and the Islamic World* (Allen Lane, 2016)

A 19th-century painting shows Greeks and Persians going head to head at the battle of Salamis in 480 BC



ALAMY/JENI NOTT





Cartoonist George Cruikshank's contemporary depiction of the Peterloo massacre. A new book by Jacqueline Riding recounts the events of 1819, which resulted in at least 15 deaths

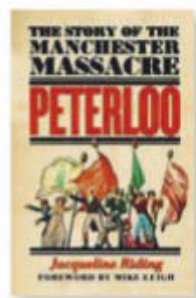
## Critical massacre

**TED VALLANCE** *applauds a gripping account of Peterloo, the peaceful protest gone wrong that transformed politics in Britain*

### Peterloo: The Story of the Manchester Massacre

Jacqueline Riding

Head of Zeus, 386 pages, £25



This year marks the bicentenary of the Peterloo massacre, when a peaceful mass protest in support of political reform held on Manchester's St Peter's Field was charged by

cavalry, resulting in at least 15 deaths, with hundreds more left injured.

Awareness of the anniversary has been heightened by the recent release of Mike Leigh's feature film *Peterloo*. Jacqueline Riding acted as historical consultant to Leigh, and in this book provides a vivid, engrossing and well-researched

narrative to accompany the film.

Riding begins by setting out the immediate historical context: the aftermath of Waterloo and the nature of Manchester at this time – its government and the networks of spies and informers that were employed to keep local reformers under surveillance. This scrutiny was not unwarranted. As Riding notes, though the movement was dominated by gentlemen such as Sir Francis Burdett and Henry 'Orator' Hunt, who focused on using

***Bloody slaughter ensued as the Hussars used sabres to disperse the crowd***

constitutional measures to achieve their goals, English radicalism also contained violent and republican elements.

This was revealed in the failed Pentrich Rising of 1817, a rebellion led by the unemployed stocking weaver Jeremiah Brandreth, encouraged but not fashioned by a government agent provocateur known as 'Oliver the Spy'. One consequence of the uncovering of the conspiracy was the creation of citizen regiments to preserve law and order. These included the Manchester and Salford Yeomanry, a cavalry unit that would go on to intervene with such disastrous effect in August 1819.

The tragedy of Peterloo was therefore the product of a confluence of different factors. Namely, the authorities' belief in the threat of popular insurrection, the creation of ill-disciplined irregular forces to counter this threat, and the channelling of reform efforts into large demonstrations as a result of the failure of other strategies (petitioning movements such as the Blanketeers march and radical electioneering in open boroughs such as Westminster). Consequently, the authorities were predisposed to see preparations for the Manchester meeting, which in fact owed much to the Lancashire folk-tradition of 'rushbearing', as evidence of militaristic drilling and marching.

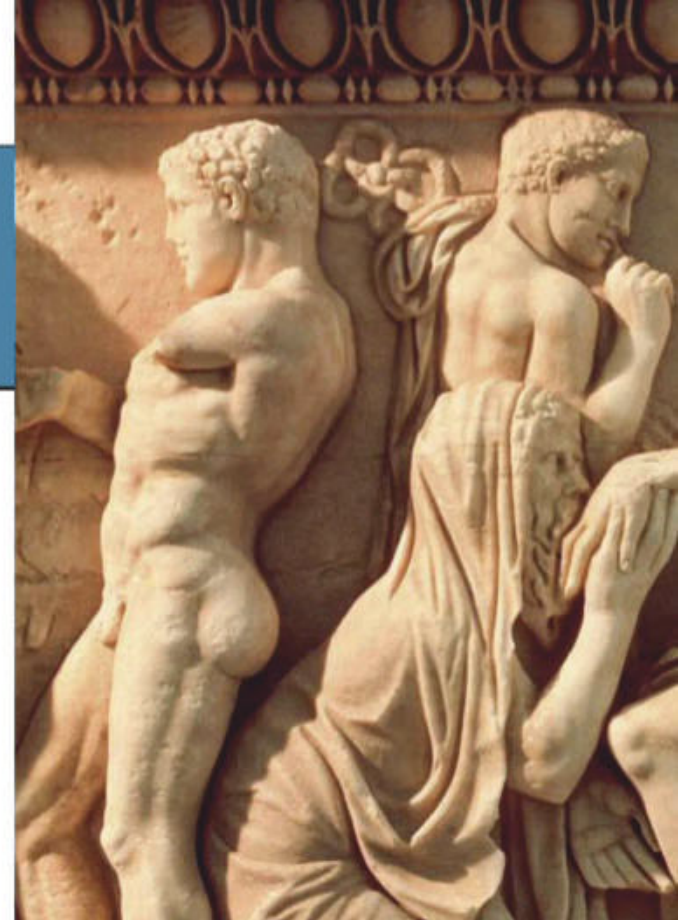
Riding delivers an evocative account of the unfolding massacre, from the orderly assembly of the crowd in the morning to the bloody slaughter that ensued as first the Yeomanry and then the Hussars used sabres to disperse the crowd.

The book makes effective use of original sources and recent scholarship to produce a history of the massacre that is both gripping and intellectually robust. While Leigh's claim (repeated here in the book's foreword) that Peterloo has been neglected as a historical event has occasioned debate – the massacre is already taught in schools – the film and Riding's excellent accompanying book will rightly heighten public awareness of the events of 16 August 1819. **H**

**Professor Ted Vallance** is the author of *A Radical History of Britain* (Abacus, 2010)



A relief from the side of a marble sarcophagus depicts a scene from Greek legend – Priam begging Achilles for the body of his son Hector



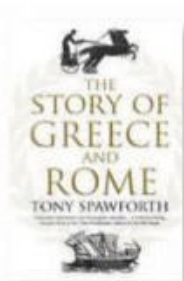
## What the Greeks did for us

**GUY DE LA BÉDOYÈRE** welcomes a volume about Greece's impact on Rome that will satisfy novices and specialists alike

### The Story of Greece and Rome

by Tony Spawforth

Yale, 392 pages, £20



Before reading this book I was amazed that anyone could attempt to recount the story of Greece and Rome in one volume, even a reasonably substantial one as this is. But it soon became clear that Tony Spawforth's plan is a lot subtler than that. His main focus is how Greek history and culture developed, and how we have the Romans to thank for preserving so much of it that it was able to have a huge impact on the medieval, Renaissance and modern world. The author is at pains to emphasise that, although we know there was much about the classical world that was "disturbing" (his word), it shouldn't prevent us from taking pleasure in all that was beautiful in Greece and Rome.

The scope of the book is necessarily

enormous and the compression therefore substantial. But it is expressly intended for people who know little or nothing about the classical world – something that is becoming ever more common as Classics is systematically exterminated on the arid plains of Britain's dystopian data-chasing education system. We should therefore welcome any attempt to provide a portal into an astonishing era that remains foundational to much of our way of life.

The book is sensitively and elegantly written, interweaving the text with well-chosen quotations and the author's personal experiences over several decades of exploring the classical world. Spawforth is fascinated by the extent of Greek influence over the Romans, and argues that what we call

**Roman culture was in fact an 'amalgam' of Greece and Rome**

Roman culture was in fact an 'amalgam' of Greece and Rome.

The book includes all sorts of remarkable stories and topics, ranging from the well-known tale of Heinrich Schliemann's determination to find archaeological evidence of the Trojan War to more recent discoveries, including the breathtaking Antikythera mechanism. This was an astonishing mechanical astronomical computer possibly designed by Archimedes but found in a Roman-era wreck off the Peloponnese.

The reader is carried through tales from the earliest beginnings of Greek society and culture, right through the Roman era to the Christian world of late antiquity. For someone unfamiliar

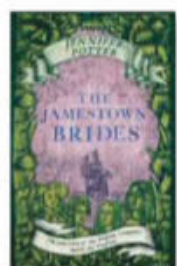
## Runaway brides

**REBECCA RIDEAL** is fascinated by the tale of 56 Englishwomen who travelled to Virginia to marry settlers they'd never met

### The Jamestown Brides: The Untold Story of England's 'Maids for Virginia'

by Jennifer Potter

Atlantic, 384 pages, £20



In 1621, the Virginia Company put out a call for "young, handsome and honestlie educated" maids to travel across the Atlantic to marry English settlers in the colony of Virginia. Fifty-six women made the journey. They were not the first English

women to go to Jamestown – the first two had travelled to Virginia as early as 1608. But these 56 were part of a concerted scheme by the Virginia Company to root English settlers to the land through marriage and family.

In Jennifer Potter's new book, we discover how, from its beginning, Jamestown was a place where six out of every seven colonists died from starvation, conflict or a "lethal brew of typhoid, dysentery and salt-water poisoning". Indeed, the land itself was seen as deadly, "full of slime and filth", while the water was held responsible for

ceaseless bouts of "Fluxes and Agues". The women who boarded ships such as the *Marmaduke* in 1621 did so of their own free will, but they certainly travelled into the unknown. On board the ship, to use Potter's delightful description, they "lived, slept, ate, shat, sickened and recovered" and when they arrived at the colony they quickly had to adjust to their new lives.

They were women drawn from the "middling sort": we find Catherine Finch (23), who was born in a village in Herefordshire before living in London with her brother, a crossbow maker for James VI & I; Buckinghamshire-born Audry Hoare (17), who gave her age at the time of travel as 19; and Ann Jackson, whose brother already lived in Virginia and who has one of the most fascinating stories – we follow the trail as she is

BRIDGEMAN





with this defining era of western civilisation, the author has created an accessible and lively route in to the subject which manages to be authoritative without being intimidating – especially concerning Greece, with which the author is at his most comfortable. For those already well versed in the period, the book makes for an interesting and rewarding read precisely because of the links drawn between Greece and Rome, and the sense of both acting as a combined force for later ages, bringing “joy and hope”. **H**

**Guy de la Bédoyère** is a writer and historian. His most recent book is *Domina: The Women Who Made Imperial Rome* (Yale University Press, 2018)

captured by, and lives with, the Powhatan Native Americans.

Potter weaves a compelling narrative, and her use of archival material to link a collection of early modern players is top notch. In Catherine Finch’s home village, we learn that “you can still touch the 14th-century sandstone font” where she was baptised. Quoting the port merchant Robert Newland, we are told that “if you read it aloud, his strong Hampshire voice rings through”.

Part micro-history, part detective work, this book doesn’t claim to answer every question one might have about colonial Jamestown, but it certainly plugs a gap in our understanding and is a real pleasure to read. **H**

**Rebecca Rideal** is the author of *1666: Plague, War and Hellfire* (John Murray, 2016)

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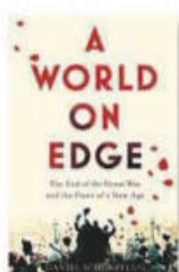
## False dawn

**NIGEL JONES** is impressed by a cinematic look at the world after the First World War, as seen by those who were there

### **A World on Edge: The End of the Great War and the Dawn of a New Age**

By Daniel Schönplflug

Macmillan, 368 pages, £25



This is a refreshing book for a German historian to write. Most such Teutonic tomes are from academics writing for other academics: thick, turgid and often tedious.

But this skims along like a butterfly, briefly alighting in one place before fluttering on to the next. It is enjoyable, easily read and speedily digested.

Daniel Schönplflug selects a score of eyewitnesses to the world-shaking events of a century ago, and recounts their experiences and reflections between the end of the First World War and the spring of 1919 in his words and theirs. His choices are eclectic. Some (like Matthias Erzberger and Ferdinand Foch, who signed the armistice, as well as TE Lawrence) played key roles in the unfolding drama. Others (Gandhi, Harry Truman and Nguyễn Ái Quốc, AKA Hồ Chí Minh) are destined for later fame. One, Rudolf Höss, will become notorious as commandant of Auschwitz, while a few – including an African-American soldier and a female victim of the Russian revolution – live and die in obscurity.

Given the author’s nationality and the central role of Germany in events, it is scarcely surprising that Germans and Austrians figure prominently. We see the war’s end and the subsequent social upheavals

**Austrian ‘femme fatale’ Alma Mahler, whose experiences at the end of the First World War are recounted in a new book**

variously through the eyes of a sailor, Richard Stumpf, caught up in the mutiny of Germany’s High Seas Fleet; Crown Prince Wilhelm, as he grumps off to Dutch exile; and the Austrian femme fatale Alma Mahler, as she juggles her tangled love life against the background of revolution and counter-revolution. The savagely satirical painter George Grosz, who briefly became a Spartacist revolutionary, and the compassionate sculptor Käthe Kollwitz, neatly combine the roles of witnesses and participants as Germany plunges into chaos.

The primary picture given by this impressionistic, almost cinematic book is bleak: we see the helplessness of individuals in the firestorm as the world moves towards a peace that seems even more menacing and unstable than the conflict. A few of Schönplflug’s witnesses entertain hopes of a more just world order, and some even try to build it, but such illusions are swiftly snuffed out. Even in relatively secure Britain, Schönplflug’s sole English female witness, Virginia Woolf, is already grappling with the mental illness that will destroy her.

It all makes for a colourful, exciting read, but this is not the book for those seeking a serious analysis of 1918–19.

It is, rather, a partial view of those tumultuous years as if through the fractured lens of a kaleidoscope. As soon as we adjust to one person’s view, Schönplflug gives his spyglass a twist and we are on to the next. As such, it reflects the bewilderingly fast sequence of shattering changes through the eyes of a random collection of those who lived through them and recorded them as they happened.

Unlike Schönplflug’s subjects, we know the darkness that lay ahead. **H**

**Nigel Jones’s** books include *Countdown to Valkyrie* (2009)





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Jewish schoolchildren, Mukacevo, around 1935–38 • Mara Vishniac Kohn.  
Courtesy International Center of Photography.



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## PAPERBACKS



### The Witch: A History of Fear, from Ancient Times to the Present

by Ronald Hutton

Yale, 376 pages, £11.99



For most people, in most of history, there was nothing but magic. When afflicted by sickness, death, severe weather or agricultural failure, you quickly blamed your chosen local scapegoat. In Europe this would typically be either the vampire, the fairy or the witch. Of these, only the witch could suffer violence as a living person. Before, during and after the official witch craze (1424–1782), both official trials and spontaneous popular violence against ‘witches’ resulted in countless deaths and serious injuries. Hutton reveals that in Italy, in around 180 BC, over 5,000 people were legally executed for what may have been witchcraft, while in the 1960s one Mexican town had a homicide rate 50 times that of the US, largely owing to its persistent witch beliefs.

These are just two of the surprising facts in Hutton’s encyclopaedic and magisterial study of witchcraft, fear and magic, ranging from the Mesopotamians and ancient Egyptians through to the developing world of our own century. If you are going to buy just one book on witch beliefs, this has to be it. Hutton has long been remarkable as an academic whose work appeals

**Historian Ronald Hutton, author of an “encyclopaedic and magisterial” history of witches**

to modern pagans as much as to professional scholars, and also deserves credit for his attempts to bridge the gap between popular and academic history. This book packs in an extraordinary wealth of data about past history and modern global belief, moves deftly through past and ongoing academic debates, and touches provocatively on the supernatural Wild Hunt, shamanism, fairy beliefs and the genuine voodoo deaths caused by terror of magic.

Like the very best thinkers, Hutton still keeps voicing doubts and asking questions. It would have been nice to see something on possible relations between witch and poltergeist, and more on British witch violence of the 19th century. But there is not a wasted word in this profoundly learned and fascinating book.

Richard Sugg’s 10 books include *A Century of Supernatural Stories* (2015), *Fairies: A Dangerous History* (Reaktion, 2018) and the upcoming *The Real Vampires* (Amberley, June 2019)

### Rome: A History in Seven Sackings

by Matthew Kneale

Atlantic, 464 pages, £10.99



Rome has a long and complex history, extending over at least 28 centuries. The feat of compressing it into less than 500 pages is remarkable, and one that Matthew Kneale approaches with a keen understanding of a Roman sense of the past. This is not the story of one Rome, but of many: the choice of “seven sackings” has resonance for a city of (allegedly) seven hills and seven legendary kings. Yet this belies the multiplicity of historical narratives: there are more than seven hills and, as Kneale himself acknowledges, more than seven sackings. In his deliberately selective version, Kneale is able to highlight Rome’s continuous reinvention of its own history, right down to Mussolini’s choosy preservation of the city’s past.

Kneale is a storyteller who evocatively reimagines the scenario leading up to each sack, before taking us on a tour of each new version of Rome, introducing us to life on the streets as the city grows from a small settlement on the Tiber to the seat of an empire, declines to a parochial backwater, then rises again to become the religious centre of Renaissance Europe before witnessing the collapse of papal dominance and the ascent of fascism.

The author does not shy away from the darker side of Rome’s struggles, in a city home to peoples of different ethnicities, religions and political

outlooks. This is a history written by someone who understands and admires Rome, but also acknowledges its flaws and idiosyncrasies.

Dr Hannah Cornwell is lecturer in ancient history at the University of Birmingham

### Elizabeth’s Rival: The Tumultuous Tale of Lettice Knollys, Countess of Leicester

by Nicola Tallis

Michael O’Mara, 448 pages, £9.99



Elizabeth I is often discussed in terms of the men around her, but this compelling and colourful

biography looks instead at a kinswoman Elizabeth both respected and resented. Daughter to Anne Boleyn’s niece, Lettice was wife to Elizabeth’s first favourite, the Earl of Leicester, and mother to the queen’s last, the Earl of Essex. But Tallis’s achievement is to show how clearly the vibrant Lettice deserves to be known in her own right.

There were scurrilous stories about her complicity in the murder of her first husband. Her second, secret marriage to Leicester saw her exiled from court. Her son’s rebellion ended in his execution and that of Lettice’s third husband Christopher Blount – yet she survived and even thrived. Born in the reign of Henry VIII, she died in that of Charles I, and Tallis’s book, beautifully researched and authoritatively written, does full justice to her extraordinary story. **H**

Sarah Gristwood’s books include *Game of Queens* (Oneworld, 2016)







## THREE MORE NOVELS ON ANCIENT EGYPTIAN CRIMES

### FICTION

## Egyptian intrigue

**NICK RENNISON** commends a tale of murder, betrayal and political ambition set in Cleopatra's court

### Death of an Eye

by Dana Stabenow

Head of Zeus, 256 pages, £18.99



Best known for a series of contemporary crime novels featuring Kate Shugak, a private investigator in Alaska, Dana Stabenow has turned her attention to ancient Egypt for her new book. The setting is Alexandria in the time of Cleopatra. Multicultural and multi-ethnic, the city is the capital of the queen's realm and a hotbed of intrigue and potential treachery. Cleopatra is the latest monarch in a Greek dynasty, ruling over native Egyptians, but only with the co-operation of the real power in the Mediterranean: the expanding Roman empire. She has enemies on all sides, from her conniving, dissipated brother and co-ruler, Ptolemy, eager to seize the throne for himself alone, to the Romans jostling for position in the entourage of her lover, Julius Caesar.

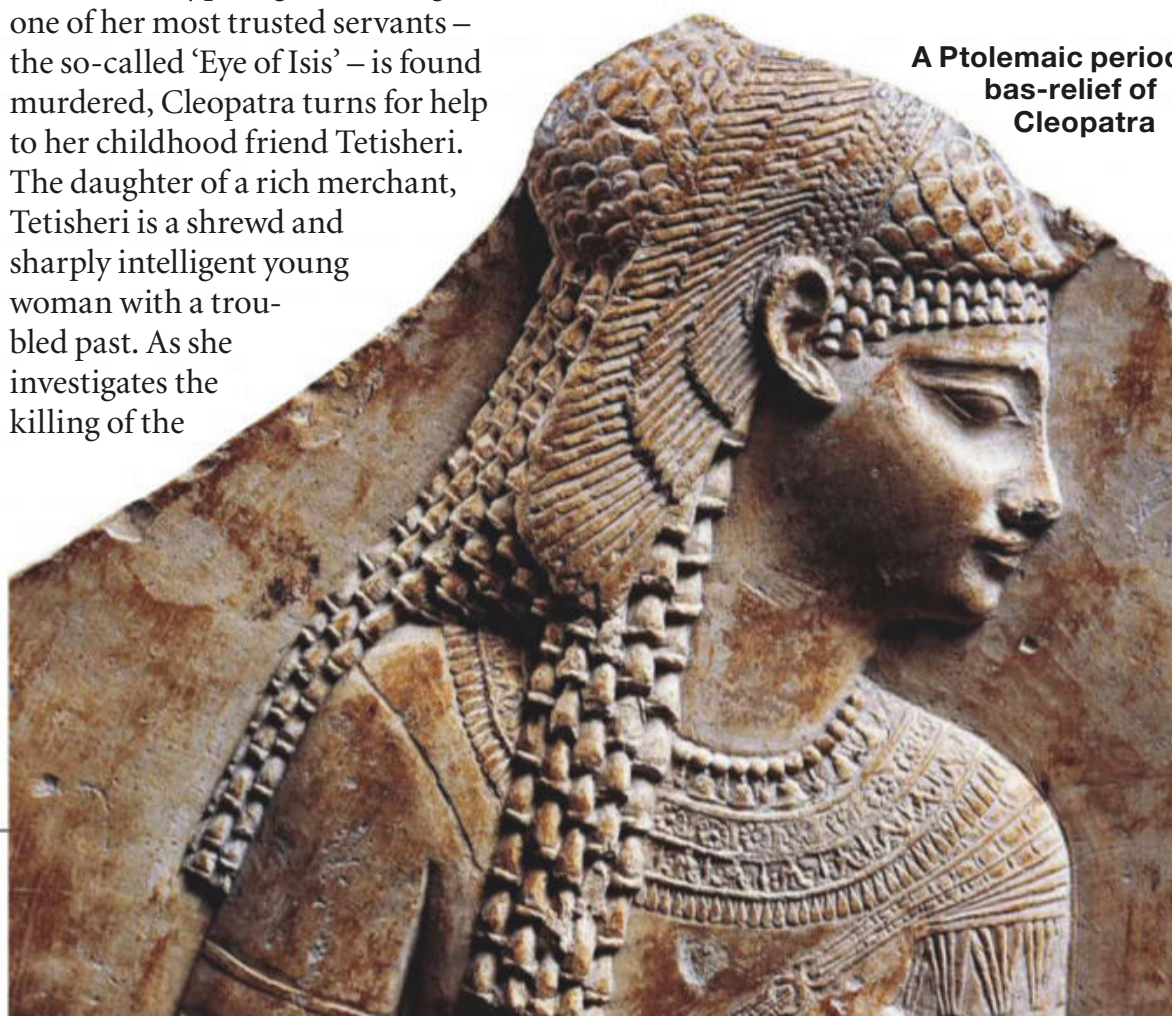
When a shipment of newly minted coins from Cyprus goes missing and one of her most trusted servants – the so-called 'Eye of Isis' – is found murdered, Cleopatra turns for help to her childhood friend Tetisheri. The daughter of a rich merchant, Tetisheri is a shrewd and sharply intelligent young woman with a troubled past. As she investigates the killing of the

'Eye' and the disappearance of the money Cleopatra badly needs to prop up her government, Tetisheri is drawn inexorably into danger. Both Ptolemy and her violent ex-husband, the Egyptian nobleman Hunefer, have reasons to hate her. The Roman senator Cassius Longinus, and his two dissolute sons, are also out to cause trouble. A visit to Cyprus uncovers another suspicious death, and Tetisheri begins to realise that there are few people she can trust. Even Cleopatra is keeping important facts from her. Perhaps only Apollodorus, an enigmatic ex-gladiator who is the queen's personal bodyguard, is on her side.

*Death of an Eye* works well as an engaging mystery. Nitpickers might want to question whether any woman in ancient Egypt would have had quite the freedom to investigate crime and murder in the way Stabenow's heroine does, but this first adventure for Tetisheri neatly sets the scene for what promises to be an entertaining series. **H**

**Nick Rennison** is the author of *Carver's Truth* (Corvus, 2016)

A Ptolemaic period bas-relief of Cleopatra



### Death Comes as the End

Agatha Christie (1944)



Not all of the queen of crime's fiction was set in the 20th century. Her second husband was an archaeologist, and she had a deep interest in the past.

In *Death Comes as the End*, Christie deployed the skills she had developed writing about Poirot and Miss Marple in a story from ancient Thebes. After mortuary priest Imhotep introduces a new concubine into his troubled household, a series of murders occurs.

### Murder in the Place of Anubis

Lynda S Robinson (1994)



A US writer of both crime fiction and romances, Lynda S Robinson is best known for a sequence of enjoyable historical whodunnits featuring

Lord Meren, the 'eyes and ears' of the boy-king Tutankhamun. In the first book of the series, Meren is ordered to look into the death of the scribe Hormin, found murdered in the sacred Place of Anubis. Hormin was a man with many enemies and Meren's task proves a difficult one.

### Nefertiti: The Book of the Dead

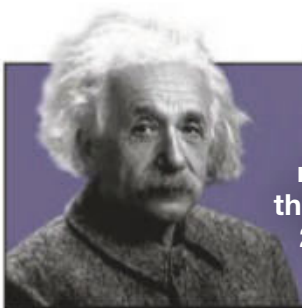
Nick Drake (2006)



This is the first in a trilogy of books about Rahotep, a so-called 'Seeker of Mysteries' in the police force of Thebes in the 14th century BC.

Rahotep is commissioned by the enigmatic pharaoh Akhenaten to discover the whereabouts of his queen, Nefertiti, who has gone missing days before an important festival. If he succeeds, Rahotep wins the pharaoh's favour; if he fails, he forfeits his life.





Will Albert Einstein be named one of the icons of the 20th century?

Jonathan Wright previews the pick of upcoming programmes

# TV & RADIO



## Key figures

### Icons

**TV BBC Two**

Scheduled for Tuesday 8 January

This major new series selects key players in different fields – leaders, scientists, activists, artists, revolutionaries, inventors and entertainers – and tells the story of the 20th century through their lives.

*Icons* builds to a show in February where the results of a public vote to select the ultimate icon of the 20th century will be revealed. As we went to press, the BBC was being tight-lipped about who will feature in the series.

**See our feature on page 20 about how individuals shape history.**



Victorian presenters Keith Brymer Jones, Anita Rani and Patch Rogers

## Handmade history

### The Victorian House of Arts and Crafts

**TV BBC Two**

Scheduled for January

Viewing industrialisation as a dehumanising process, Arts and Crafts luminaries William Morris, John Ruskin and Gertrude Jekyll looked back to an earlier age. For them, self-sufficiency, closeness to nature and taking pride in creating lovingly crafted goods were ways to forge a better society.

What would it be like to live by these ideals? In a new living history series, six modern-day craftspeople are set the task of using traditional methods and working collectively to renovate different rooms in an Arts and Crafts-style property.

## Lost in translation

*Professor Mary Beard tells us about a show that celebrates two educational trailblazers – and challenges her trolls*

### Amo Amas Amusical

**RADIO Radio 4**

Scheduled for New Year's Eve

For generations of British schoolchildren, the name Benjamin Hall Kennedy was synonymous with his *Revised Latin Primer*. With its mnemonic verses used to help pupils fix the rules of Latin grammar, it was a standard textbook in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. It was also written largely by Kennedy's daughters, Marion and Julia.

And this, as Professor Mary Beard explains, matters, not just because their contributions long went unacknowledged, but because the book dates from an era when there was huge opposition to women getting degrees, something the sisters would have seen at first hand because their father was a professor at Trinity College, Cambridge. "They lived through these appalling riots [by male undergraduates] against women getting degrees, against the idea that women should have full and proper access to higher education," Beard says.

Both women played an important role in extending higher education to women. Julia was "a self-taught linguist" at Girton College, Cambridge, while Marion, who was more of a campaigner

than her sister, helped to set up Newham College. Both were also suffragists.

Today, we like to think of ourselves as more enlightened than a century ago, but the social media trolling that Beard has experienced suggests otherwise.

"There's the same problem about women not getting recognised for the jobs they're doing, and women's achievements being bypassed and going out under the name of their menfolk," she adds.

To pull these strands together – the sisters' work and lives, the battle for women to take degrees and the parallels with modern-day sexism – *Amo Amas Amusical* has an unusual format.

Notably, it contains new music by composer Emily Levy, performed as live in the BBC Radio Theatre. The music includes pieces that incorporate "foul" and "dreadful" online abuse directed at Beard, albeit the abuse is used in a disguised fashion. "In order to get it there, we've had it translated into Latin, so our own two fingers have gone up at the trolls," says Beard.

The show also features a contribution from Christopher Stray who first uncovered the Kennedys' story. Taken overall, in Beard's estimation, this is "high-fibre" entertainment that makes for "a grand extravaganza of connections and fun". **H**

**"There's the same problem today about women not getting recognised for the jobs they're doing"**



Mary Beard with a copy of the Latin primer that inspired her innovative new Radio 4 programme





Neil MacGregor in conversation with Emmanuel Macron and Angela Merkel. His new series explores how other countries view Britain and its history

## The view from abroad

### As Others See Us

**RADIO** Radio Four

Scheduled for Monday 31 December

How does the rest of the world see Great Britain? As the country's place in the world comes under scrutiny in the wake of the Brexit vote, Neil MacGregor visits five countries – Germany, India, Egypt, Nigeria and Canada – to assess how leading political, business and cultural figures in these nations perceive us.

History is intrinsic to the discussions that MacGregor, former director of the British Museum, has as he meets individuals such as Wole Soyinka,

the first African Nobel Laureate for Literature; Chrystia Freeland, Canada's minister of foreign affairs; and Shobana Kamineni, first female president of the Confederation of Indian Industries.

Some of the memories they share – of reading Charles Dickens or watching *Monty Python's Flying Circus* – are positive, but these are citizens of countries where British influence hasn't always been benign. "We found a quirky but extremely well-informed mix of affection and admiration, irritation and bewilderment," says MacGregor of his interviewees' attitudes to Britain.

## Secrets and lies

### Mrs Wilson

**DVD** (Spirit Entertainment, certificate 15)

In April 1963, the writer Alexander 'Alec' Wilson died of a heart attack. His eventful life had encompassed teaching English literature in India, work with the intelligence services in the Second World War and success as a spy novelist. He also found time to marry four times, yet apparently didn't have the time to get divorced, making Wilson a serial bigamist.

Even today, many of the details of his life are sketchy, in part because the authorities have yet to release records related to his secret work. Nevertheless,



Ruth Wilson plays her own grandmother in a complex family drama

enough is known to make for compelling drama – as this BBC series starring Ruth Wilson as Alison, Alec Wilson's third wife and Ruth's own grandmother, demonstrates.

Told largely in flashback, the drama begins with the death of Wilson (Iain Glen), soon followed by the shock of his first wife, Gladys Wilson (Elizabeth Rider), paying Alison a visit. Suddenly uncertain as to whether she really knew the man to whom she was married, Alison starts to look back at their shared past in the 1940s.

It's hard to tell how much is historically accurate, but that's not really the point of this atmospheric and moving account of how the past can haunt the present.

## ALSO LOOK OUT FOR...

FIND WEEKLY TV & RADIO UPDATES AT [historyextra.com/topic/tv-and-radio](http://historyextra.com/topic/tv-and-radio)



How will modern pupils cope with schooling of the past?

Education for all was introduced in the late Victorian era. In the years since, as **Back in Time for School** (BBC Two, January) explores by sending three teachers and 15 teenagers on a time-travelling odyssey, schooling has changed – a lot. Presented by Sara Cox and Polly Russell, the series sees how its subjects react, for example, to the strict discipline of a 1950s grammar school or the rather more relaxed environment of a progressive comprehensive. Along the way, school dinners are compulsory.

Over on Radio 4, highlights include **The Battles That Won Our Freedom** (7 January), a series that explores the origins of liberties we now take for granted. Meanwhile, **Curtain Down at Her Majesty's: A Play in Five Acts** (Radio 4, New Year's Eve) looks back at the final days of Queen Victoria's life, and the chaos and confusion that surrounded her funeral. New editions of **In Our Time** (Radio 4) deal with papal infallibility (Thursday 10 January) and Samuel Beckett (Thursday 17 January).

Over the holiday period, PBS America offers viewers the chance to go into box set mode. On Friday 28 December, there's the seven-part **The War**, directed and produced by Ken Burns and Lynn Novick, which tells the story of the Second World War via the personal accounts of men and women from four quintessentially American towns. Then, on New Year's Eve, **The Vietnam War**, also from Burns and Novick, looks back at a conflict that cost the lives of more than a million combatants.



# Collector's Editions

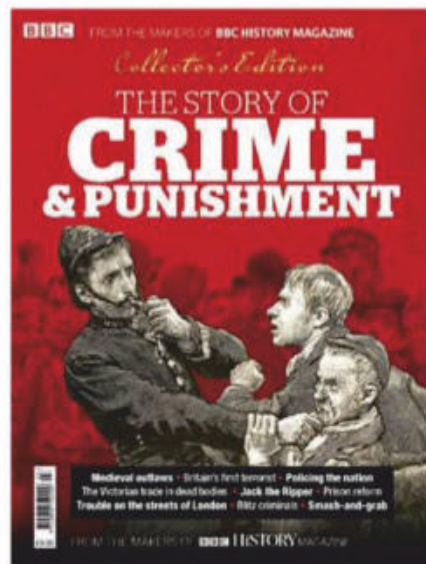
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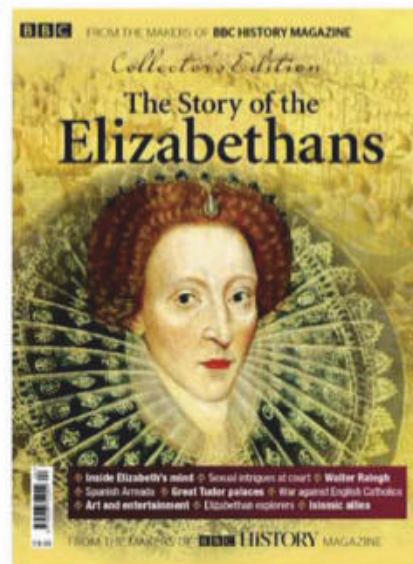
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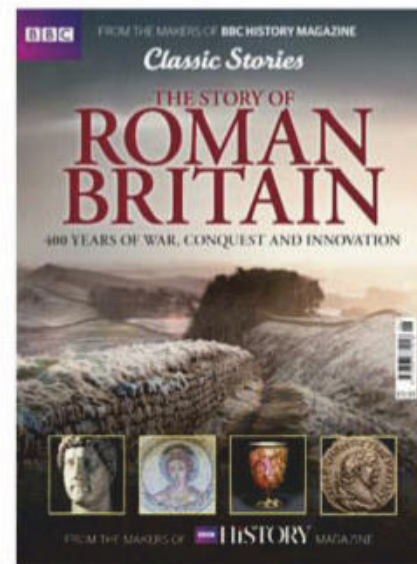
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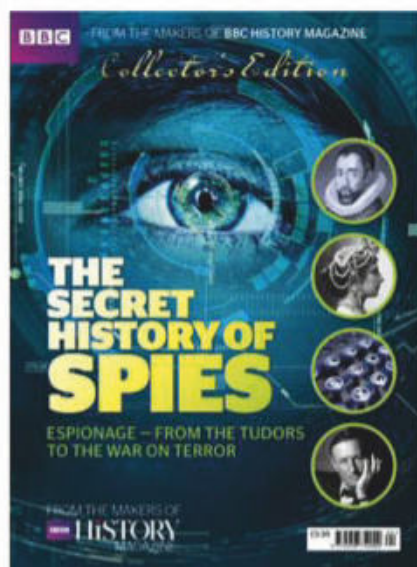
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## HISTORY EXPLORER

# Roman Britain's final frontier

Ellie Cawthorne and Bill Hanson visit the **Antonine Wall** in central Scotland, which once marked the Roman empire's northernmost frontier

**S**naking across the width of Scotland's central belt, mostly now underground and largely invisible, weaves the Antonine Wall. This mammoth fortified barrier once marked the northernmost frontier of Rome's empire, cleaving Scotland down the middle to defend Roman territory from troublesome Caledonian tribes to the north.

Traces of the wall's route can still be found at a series of archaeological sites speckled along its length. Just west of Falkirk, hidden in the woods behind the staggeringly modern Falkirk Wheel boat lift, you can find one of the best-preserved sections of the wall, at the fort of Rough Castle. Here, you can still see where Britain's Roman conquerors manipulated the landscape more than 1,800 years ago. With grassy verges rising and falling steeply, Rough Castle looks at first glance more like a geographical oddity than a historical site. While today we are surrounded by trees and the odd telegraph pole, pollen evidence suggests that, when construction on the wall began back in the second century AD, the surrounding area would have been cleared and cultivated,

offering far-reaching views. The armoured ramparts must have been a dramatic sight.

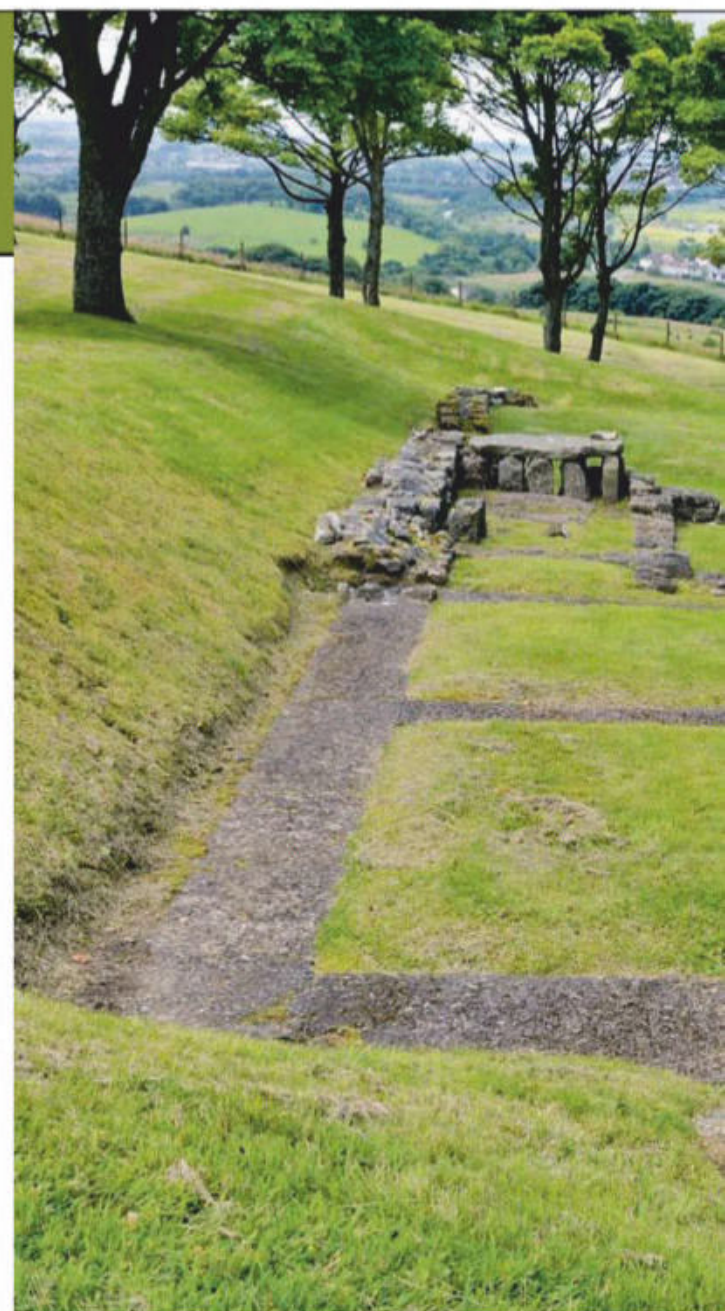
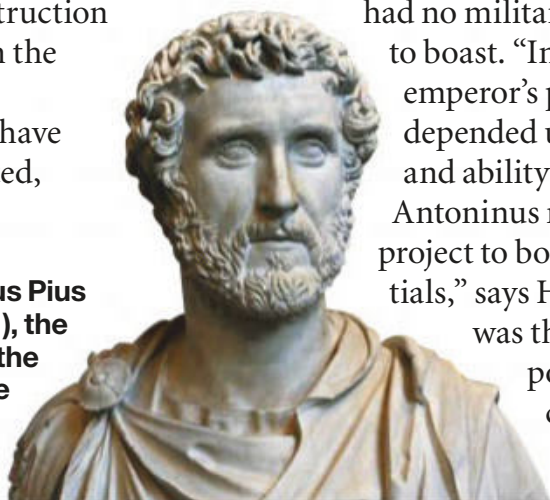
Built by three legions under the command of Governor Quintus Lollius Urbicus from AD 142, the wall stretched 37 miles (or around 40,000 Roman paces) from the Firth of Forth to the Firth of Clyde. Seventeen forts punctuated its length, with smaller fortlets roughly every mile inbetween, housing a total of 6,000–7,000 soldiers. According to Professor Bill Hanson of the University of Glasgow, who specialises in Roman frontiers, "It was an enormous project. Absolutely massive – there's no doubt it would have dominated the landscape."

### Imperial propaganda

So what led Rome's leaders to invest such a huge amount of manpower and resources in an inhospitable enemy territory more than 1,500 miles from the imperial capital? The answer, it seems, is largely down to canny political careerism on the part of the man from whom the wall takes its name – Antoninus Pius. On becoming emperor in AD 138, the reportedly mild and sensible Antoninus

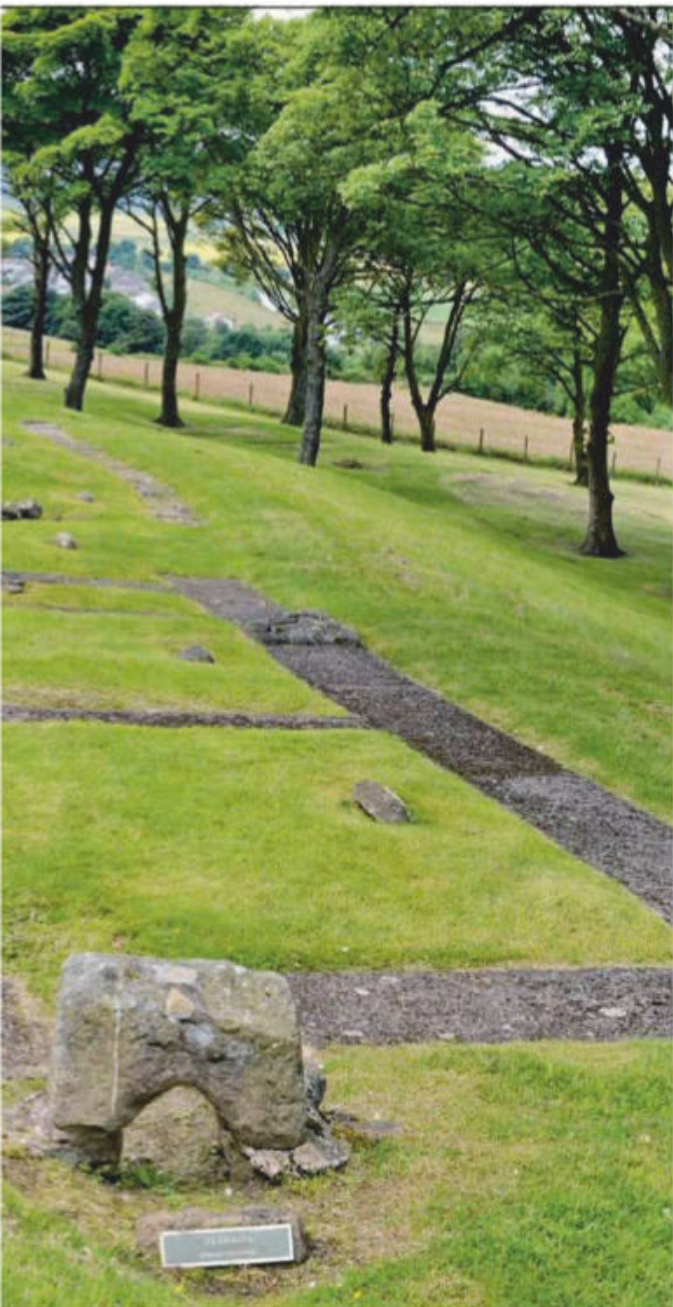
had no military achievements of which to boast. "In a society in which an emperor's power, prestige and status depended upon military prowess and ability to expand the empire, Antoninus needed an expansionist project to boost his military credentials," says Hanson. And Britain was the ideal place to pursue a politically motivated campaign. It was familiar

**A bust of Antoninus Pius (reigned AD 138–161), the emperor behind the construction of the Antonine Wall**



GETTY IMAGES/ALAMY/ROBERT HARDING





CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT:  
**Foundations of a bath house at the Roman fort on Bar Hill; a view along the line of the wall west of Rough Castle; defensive pits or *lilia* at Rough Castle; looking west towards Watling Lodge, where a steep-sided ditch made a formidable barrier**







**A view of Rough Castle from the northern lip of the Antonine Wall. Stationed at Rough Castle fort were the Sixth Cohort of Nervians, from modern-day Belgium**

territory for Roman troops, while a connection to Julius Caesar, who had first invaded in 55 BC, added to its propaganda potential. However, Antoninus was cautious in his ambitions. Rather than risk taking on the Caledonian tribes to bring the entirety of Scotland under Roman control, he opted for the rather more modest goal of extending the empire's territory 100 miles further than his predecessor, Hadrian. Antoninus's venture paid off. He was richly rewarded back in Rome with an imperial acclamation, only the second of his tenure as emperor.

At Rough Castle, as a bitter wind buffets around us and we spot a pair of Wellington boots abandoned at the bottom of the ditch, Rome seems a long way away. But although it may have been on the furthest fringes of empire, this outpost was part of a much bigger, interconnected system. "While Britons would be subsumed into the army and shipped out to places such as Germany, likewise the Antonine Wall was staffed by auxiliary troops brought in from across the empire. That way, they were less likely to side with the locals. We know that the Sixth

Cohort of Nervians, from modern-day Belgium, were stationed at Rough Castle, and others living on the wall hailed from as far off as Syria and Morocco."

## Life on the wall

With no written sources in existence about everyday life on the wall, the best evidence to hand is archaeological. Since the early 20th century, digs have turned up a wealth of metalwork, bronze work, coins and brooches, and plenty of pottery – "stuff you usually find" at Roman sites, Hanson says, casually listing the objects with the familiarity of someone who has found plenty such artefacts over the years.

Today, you can walk around the former site of the garrison's barracks, regimental bathhouse, granary and commander's residence. You can also trace sections of the military way, the Roman road running along



**A section of a gaming board found at Bearsden Roman Fort**

the south of the wall to allow for the easy transportation of troops and supplies.

Unlike the stone-built Hadrian's Wall (where ramparts still remain visible for visitors to scramble over today) the Antonine Wall was only ever a turf rampart on a stone base. Although it is thought to have risen as high as an intimidating 12ft, and was 14ft wide at points, 1,800 years of erosion by Scottish weather now mean that even the best preserved section of rampart (found at Rough Castle) is little more than a grass-covered hump. Yet the wall was no mere mound of mud. To the north of the ramparts was a massive ditch. Up to 40ft wide and 12ft deep, it was far bigger than that at Hadrian's Wall, and perilously steep. The best surviving sections can now be found at nearby Watling Lodge. Walking along the base of the ditch today gives you a sense of the impossibility of scaling it. Even after centuries of weathering, it still looms far above our heads.

And the defences didn't stop there. Sloping up towards the ditch we encounter one of Rough Castle's strangest sights: a series of oval-shaped pits, perfectly aligned in tight, alternating rows. These, Hanson tells me, are *lilia*. While their floral-inspired name may sound innocuous, these *lilia* were

**"THE FORTS HELD HUNDREDS OF MEN, AN ATTRACTION FOR MERCHANTS, TRADERS, PROSTITUTES AND TAVERN KEEPERS"**



**A distance slab of the Second Legion found on Summerston farm, near Balmuildy Roman fort, in c1694. Once, this would have been brightly painted.**



## VISIT

### Antonine Wall



Rough Castle, Falkirk, FK1 4RS  
● [antoninewall.org](http://antoninewall.org)

anything but – they were deadly mantraps. “You dug a hole, put a sharpened stake in the bottom and then covered it over so it was hidden,” Hanson says. “Or you could fill them with thorn bushes, to act as a sort of natural barbed wire. Setting the pits in an alternating pattern meant that it was nigh on impossible to run up the slope without hitting one – anyone trying to sneak up on the fort would soon find themselves in trouble. When you add these to rampart and ditch, you can see that the wall certainly wouldn’t be crossed in a hurry.”

### Shock and awe

Urbicus’s troops didn’t only use physical defences to deter attacks, but also scare tactics and intimidation. Placed along the wall were intricately carved distance markers, some of which can be seen at Glasgow’s Hunterian Museum. As well as recording the construction undertaken by various legions, these stones were decorated with violent images of the subjugation of Scots. They were brightly painted, and even used a specific shade of red to depict blood in images of beheaded Caledonians and vicious Roman eagles with blood-stained beaks. These gory carvings were clear statements of Roman domination, easily understood by those unable to read the Latin inscriptions.

These defences suggest the Romans took the threat of attack by Caledonian tribes seriously. “I think the Romans did perceive there to be a genuine threat from the north,” says Hanson. “It’s possible that there was a backlash to the installation of a hard border that cut through existing social boundaries.

Further forts were added to the original plan for the wall, which may well have been a knee-jerk reaction to that local backlash.”

However, the relationship between local people and their Roman occupiers was not wholly antagonistic. “A whole range of different techniques were used to keep local people onside, from military intervention to political arrangements,” says Hanson. Excavations at indigenous Scottish broch sites have uncovered Roman materials, suggesting that trade took place between the two peoples.

Even along the wall itself, the lines between Romans and locals were far from clear cut. “People tend to forget that these forts were not solely military in nature,” says Hanson. “The fact that they held hundreds of men with money was an attraction for merchants, traders, prostitutes and tavern keepers, so it was inevitable that small communities would have sprung up around them. At Croy Hill, for example, we know there was a civilian settlement on one side, and farming and a pottery kiln on the other.”

As more archaeological evidence emerges, there’s increasing evidence that, although Roman soldiers weren’t allowed to marry until the third century, some men had partners and families who lived in the forts or nearby. At Bar Hill, for instance, children’s leather shoes have been discovered.

Less than 20 years after construction had begun, however, the wall was abandoned – despite the huge investment of money and men funnelled into Antoninus’s grand expansion project. This was most likely because of the overstretched resources of the Roman army, which was simultaneously trying to operate troublesome campaigns elsewhere in the empire. Unable, or unwilling, to maintain the frontier, the auxiliaries fell back to the more secure boundary of Hadrian’s Wall.

The distance stones were buried and the forts demolished, but the wall and ditch were left as they were, to become enduring features of the Scottish landscape. Even today, they make for an impressive sight. **H**



**Professor Bill Hanson** of the University of Glasgow specialises in the history and archaeology of Roman frontiers.

Words: Ellie Cawthorne

## ROMAN FORTS THREE MORE PLACES TO EXPLORE

### 1 Hunterian Museum

GLASGOW

**Where artefacts from the Antonine Wall can be found**

Alongside its anatomy and zoology displays, the Hunterian is home to a permanent exhibition on the story of the wall, from its construction and habitation to its archaeological rediscovery. Many artefacts uncovered along the wall are on display here. As well as the distance slabs, there are everyday items such as a bronze lamp, gaming board (pictured left), leather tent and the children’s shoes found at Bar Hill fort.

● [gla.ac.uk/hunterian](http://gla.ac.uk/hunterian)

### 2 Vindolanda

NORTHUMBERLAND

**Where life in a Roman garrison was recorded for posterity**

Occupied from c85–370 AD, Vindolanda is one of the most impressive forts along Hadrian’s Wall. The extensive remains of the garrison are still being explored – visit between April and September and you may well see archaeologists at work. It’s here that perhaps the best evidence of everyday life in Roman Britain was uncovered: the Vindolanda writing tablets (right). These ink-scrawled wooden fragments are an unparalleled record of life at the Roman garrison, and even include a birthday party invite dating back to AD 100.

● [vindolanda.com](http://vindolanda.com)



### 3 Isca Augusta

CAERLEON, SOUTH WALES

**Where a legion had its HQ**

Located in the village of Caerleon in south Wales, this legionary fortress was one of Britain’s three major Roman military headquarters, along with York and Chester. Home to the Second Augustan Legion, it was founded around AD 75, and remained a military base for expeditions to take on the warlike Silures people over the next 200 years. Caerleon is also home to the impressive remains of Britain’s largest Roman amphitheatre (once big enough to seat a 5,000-strong legion), and the National Roman Legion Museum (closed for repairs until autumn 2019).

● [cadw.gov.wales](http://cadw.gov.wales)





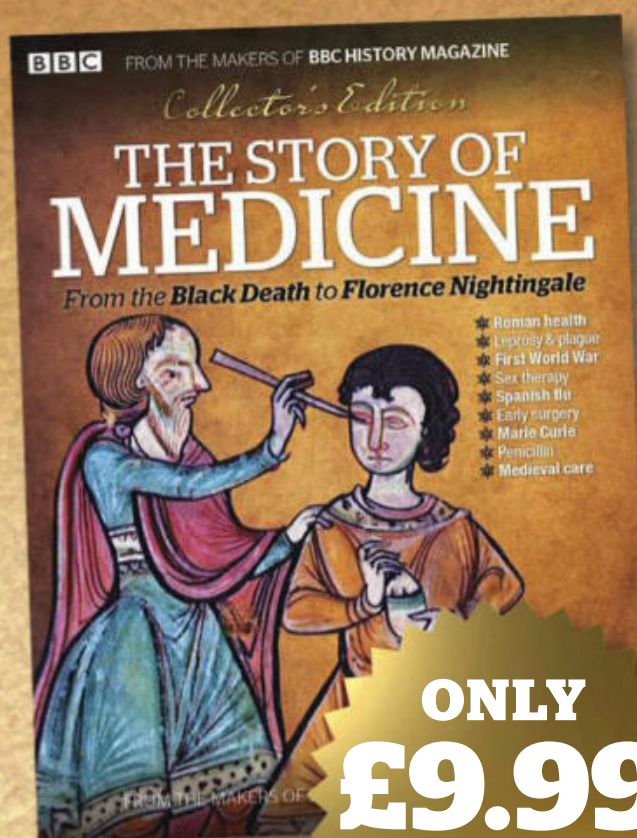
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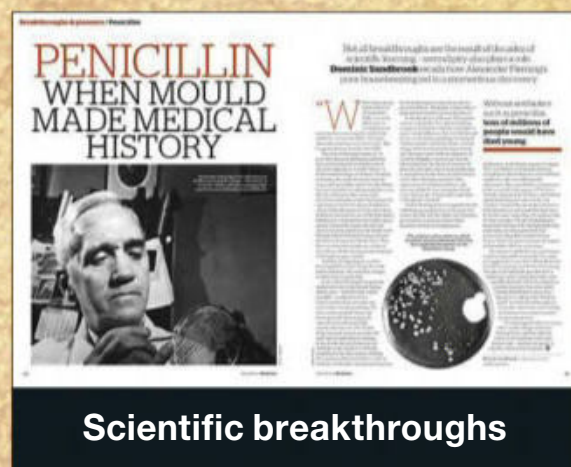
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# FIVE THINGS TO DO IN JANUARY

## A lost Jewish world

### EXHIBITION

#### Roman Vishniac Rediscovered

Jewish Museum London

Until 24 February

☎ 020 7284 7384

● [jewishmuseum.org.uk](http://jewishmuseum.org.uk)



**T**he first UK retrospective of Russian-born photographer Roman Vishniac is currently on show in London, examining Jewish life in eastern Europe between the two world wars. Vishniac emigrated from Russia to Berlin in 1920, in his early twenties, and later turned his photographic attention to the huge political changes that took place in Germany after Hitler's rise to power in 1933. He documented the growing signs of oppression, the insidious propaganda that was such a feature of the Nazi state, and the ensuing genocide of the Jewish people.

In 1935 Vishniac was commissioned by the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee to travel to eastern Europe and take photographs that would draw attention to Jewish suffering and aid fundraising for impoverished Jewish communities. His images captured a world that vanished with the outbreak of war.

The exhibition is divided between two venues – the Jewish Museum London and the Photographers' Gallery – and features iconic works as well as several lesser-known images taken between the 1920s and 1970s. Recently discovered vintage prints, rare film footage, contact sheets, personal correspondence and original magazine publications will also be on show.



Roman Vishniac's c1935-37 photograph of a young girl sitting in a bed in Warsaw. His powerful images are on show in London

### EXHIBITION / FREE ENTRY

#### The Wandering Womb

RCN Library and Heritage

Centre, London

Until 22 March

☎ 0345 337 3368

● [rcn.org.uk](http://rcn.org.uk)

This exhibition charts the evolution of women's healthcare – from ancient amulets to prevent baby loss to today's hormone replacement therapies. Theories about menstruation and childbearing – once thought to make women less rational than men – will also be explored.



A detail from *The Music Lesson* by Lord Frederic Leighton, 1877

### EXHIBITION

#### Seen & Heard: Victorian Children in the Frame

Guildhall Art Gallery, London

Until 28 April

☎ 020 7332 3700

● [guildhall.cityoflondon.gov.uk/art-gallery](http://guildhall.cityoflondon.gov.uk/art-gallery)

Featuring rarely seen pieces from Tate Britain, the Royal Academy, and the City of London's permanent collections, this exhibition uses works of art to examine changing perceptions of children and family values in the 19th century.

### EXHIBITION / FREE ENTRY

#### Whistler & Nature

Fitzwilliam Museum,

Cambridge

8 January–17 March

☎ 01223 332900

● [fitzmuseum.cam.ac.uk](http://fitzmuseum.cam.ac.uk)

Around 90 paintings, sketches and prints will go on show at the Fitzwilliam Museum this month, shedding new light on the life and works of the late Victorian painter James McNeill Whistler. The exhibition will examine how the Whistler family's involvement in industry, his own pursuit of a military career and the natural world all influenced his artistic style and subject matter.

### EXHIBITION / FREE ENTRY

#### Embroidered Stories: Scottish Samplers

National Museum of

Scotland, Edinburgh

Until 21 April

☎ 0300 123 6789

● [nms.ac.uk](http://nms.ac.uk)

Small pieces of needlework, created by children in the 18th and 19th centuries, are now on show in Edinburgh. The 70 examples on display offer information on the education, family, religion and interests of the children who made them.



## MY FAVOURITE PLACE

# Chiang Mai, Thailand



**Jonathan Healey**

The latest in our historical holiday series sees Jonathan explore a city where ancient traditions meet modern culture

It's not that Chiang Mai tries to hide its history. Not one bit. In fact, the place presented by the slick Thai tourism industry is a sparkling city of ancient traditions and timeless culture.

But Chiang Mai has veiled its past under more layers of modernity than it would perhaps care to admit. Plush hotels and luxury spas serve an international clientele; markets hum with trade; motorbikes, tuk-tuks and songthaews (cheap passenger vehicles) buzz

purposefully along built-up streets. The stench of gasoline sits heavy in the air, where it mingles with the earthy smoke of the streetside grills. Yet under Chiang Mai's layers of noisy modernity there lies an ancient capital: the tantalising, enticing heart of a long-lost kingdom.

"I will build a truly large city," announced King Mangrai at the end of the 13th century. His realm, in what is now the north region of Thailand, was rich and energetic, known as the Lan Na, or the 'the

Country of a Million Rice Fields'. The new kingdom stepped into a power vacuum in the humid uplands of central south-east Asia, and Chiang Mai was to be its gleaming new capital. Founded in 1296, the city boasted a number of auspicious characteristics: one was the sacred mountain of Doi Suthep, looming over the city to the west. Another was the Ping river, which raced south, eventually joining the Nan to become the mighty Chao Phraya.

It's a land of mountains, forests and sparkling temples. At the top of Doi Suthep sits the sacred temple of Wat Phra That Doi Suthep, said to have been established in 1383 by King Keu Naone to enshrine a shard of bone said to have come from the shoulder of the Buddha himself. The steep 306-step staircase to the temple, lined with mythical serpent-like creatures (nāga), was created to help climbers attain Buddhist merit.

The centuries that followed the creation of Chiang Mai brought prosperity. Attracting traders from across the region, it grew to be called the 'city of 12 languages', doing a busy

**Wat Phra Singh is among the most visited temples in Chiang Mai**

traffic in goods from the rich surrounding countryside and hill villages. Lan Na products were sent south along the Ping river to be sold in the great city of Ayutthaya and beyond.

Wealth, though, invited jealousy: not just from the muscular Siamese kingdom to the south of Chiang Mai, but also the succession of Burmese states to the north and west, and it was a Burmese king, the warrior Bayinnaung, who marched his elephants into Chiang Mai in 1558.

Spared western colonialism, the state of Lan Na was nonetheless ruled from Burma for two centuries, the darkest days coming when it was sacked and depopulated in 1763. But then, the tides of empire shifted: the Burmese were driven out, and



A monument to three key figures in Chiang Mai's history, including Mangrai who founded the city in the late 13th century







“Under layers of noisy modernity lies the tantalising heart of a long-lost kingdom

## ADVICE FOR TRAVELLERS

### BEST TIME TO GO

Chiang Mai's tropical savanna climate means it has warm to hot weather all year. Temperatures are lower between November and February (around 25°C during the day). The Loi Krathong festival, which sees Thai people make wishes as they launch small portions of food on rivers and ponds, usually falls in November. Chiang Mai flower festival takes place in early February, with glorious displays of yellow and white chrysanthemums and damask roses.

### GETTING THERE

Chiang Mai international airport is 3km south-west of the old city. Direct flights from Bangkok to Chiang Mai take around 60-70 mins – travelling by train is cheaper but significantly longer (between 12 and 15 hours).

### WHAT TO PACK

The countryside around Chiang Mai is mountainous, so bring hiking boots and plenty of mosquito repellent.

### WHAT TO BRING BACK

Don't buy Buddhist statues to take home and gather dust: these are religious artefacts and many Thai people consider such irreverence disrespectful. Instead, take one of the many local cooking courses, some out at local farms, and bring back a skill for making tom yum soup or *sai ua* (a type of sausage).

Chiang Mai offered its hand to the Thais.

You catch glimpses of the old Chiang Mai even as you navigate the hustle of the new. You'll see a parade of saffron-robed monks against the long shadows of the evening sun. You'll note a fragment of the sienna-brick city walls, rebuilt since the 19th century and lining the medieval moat and preserving the ancient square citadel.

You might pass through one of the old gates, perhaps Tha Pae, where the tourists dodge pigeons and vendors to grab the perfect selfie. You'll taste Chiang

Mai's glorious food: luscious Thai favourites, of course, but also traditional spicy northern specialities, and wonderful Burmese curries, representing an ancient culture of migration across the mountain passes.

Then there are the trees. The city was carved out of the forest, and that forest has never really given it up. Even today, Chiang Mai's streets are an arboreal symphony of waxy green leaves, golden flowers and drooping banyans.

Most of all, as you turn a corner in the carefully planned streets of the old town, a golden *chedi* (stupa) will catch your eye in the sun, inviting you to step into the sacred world of Chiang Mai's ancient Buddhist culture. The grandest temples draw the crowds, not least the hilltop

wonders of Doi Suthep. But the greatest joy is to saunter through the backstreets and stumble across a curved teak *ubosot* (ordination hall), a perfectly crafted *ho trai* (monastic library) or an antique tumbledown *chedi*.

Here, in the shade and sheltered from the streets, where the gentle wind-chimes drift dreamlike through the air, is the real Chiang Mai. It is free, for once, of its modern veil: a city both Lan Na and Thai, at the same time present and past. ■

**Dr Jonathan Healey** is associate professor in social history at the University of Oxford

**Next month:** Chandrika Kaul explores the city of Warsaw in Poland

### Been there...

Have you visited **Chiang Mai**? Do you have a top tip for readers? Contact us via Twitter or Facebook

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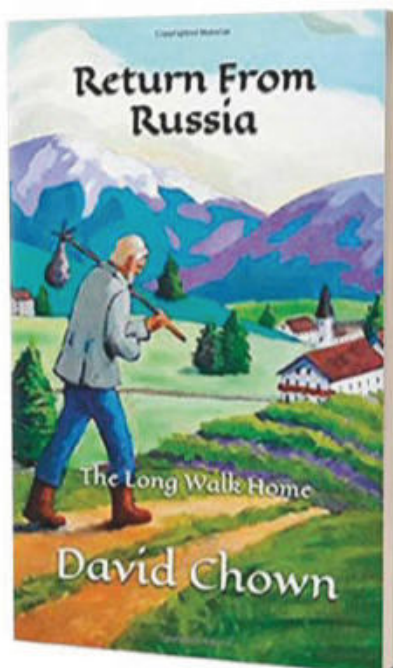


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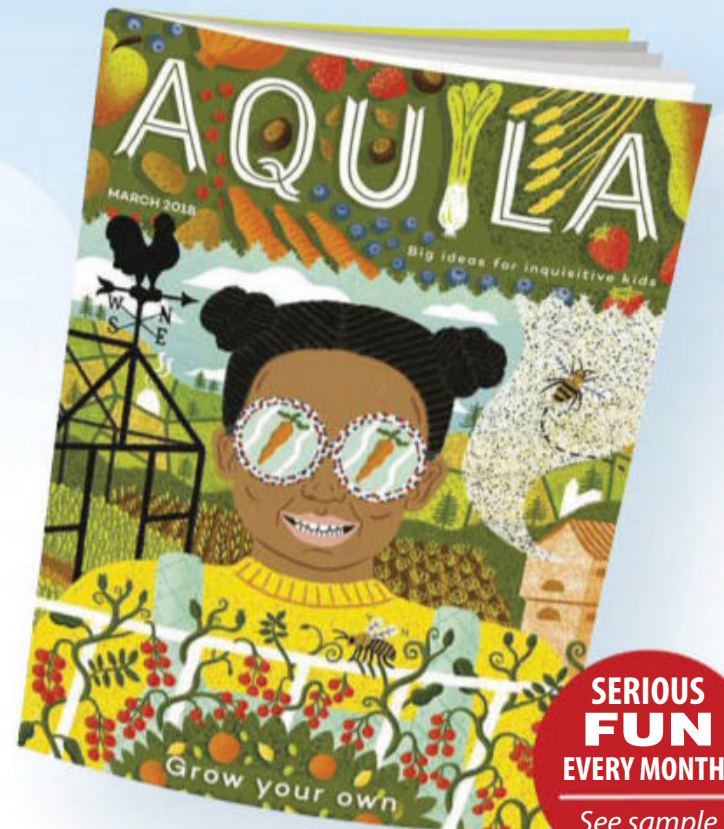
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# NEXT MONTH

FEBRUARY ISSUE ON SALE 24 JANUARY 2019

## A woman's place?

Suzannah Lipscomb reveals how women were empowered in the 17th century



## The flight of Uganda's Asians

Becky Taylor tells the stories of those who fled Idi Amin to make a new life in Britain

## A Victorian Bill Bryson

Richard Sugg describes an American traveller's adventures in 19th-century Britain

## Viking attacks

Laura Ashe on the Norse invasions that rocked England in the 11th century





# MISCELLANY

Q&A



## QUIZ

BY JULIAN HUMPHRYS

Try your hand at this month's history quiz

ONLINE  
QUIZZES  
historyextra.com  
/quiz

1. How did seafaring Thomas FitzStephen go down in history in 1120?

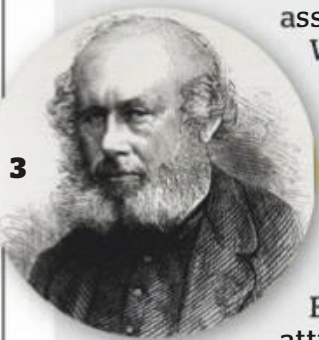
2. What ended a potential diplomatic spat between Britain and Portugal in 1811 over ownership of the Atlantic island of Sabrina?

3. Of what event was assistant surgeon William Brydon initially thought to have been the only survivor?

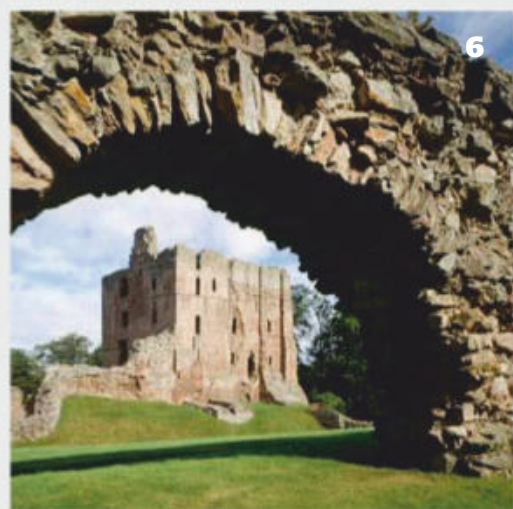
4. What did Isabella MacDuff, Countess of Buchan do to attract the ire of Edward I of England?

5. What was first clarified by Angelo Barovier, a 15th-century resident of Murano?

6. Where is this and which superlative did Sir Walter Scott use to describe it?



3



6

### QUIZ ANSWERS

1. He was captain of the *White Ship*, which sank in the English Channel with the loss of nearly everyone on board, including the son of Henry I.
2. It disappeared beneath the waves.
3. The British retreat from Kabul in 1842.
4. She crowned Robert Bruce king of Scots.
5. Glass.
6. Norham Castle on the banks of the Tweed. "The most dangerous place in England."

### GOT A QUESTION?

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ILLUSTRATION BY GLEN MCBETH

## Q How did policing work in London before the Metropolitan Police Act was passed in 1829?

Eric Vienna, Virginia

**A** Before 1829, London's policing was made up of a patchwork of different roles and organisations. Firstly, there were watchmen, who stood or patrolled all night. Some of the most efficient parish watches pioneered tactics and organisation later seen with the Met. Each of London's parishes also appointed a number of constables – amateurs serving for a year at a time, but able to claim fees. They supervised the watchmen and responded to complaints of serious crime, helping victims to prosecute suspects.

Another part of the system were the horse and foot patrols used to suppress highway robbery, funded by the government for London outside the City (which had its own system) and controlled from Bow Street. This was

also the headquarters of one of several 'police offices' – teams of professional constables under a magistrate, who dealt with serious crime. Meanwhile, the Thames River Police attempted to prevent theft from the docks.

Nowadays, all of this work is done by just two forces: the Met and the City Police. The old system didn't work for new suburbs such as Hammersmith, or stop incidents of unrest like the Queen Caroline Riots of 1821. Nevertheless, some parishes, such as St Marylebone, opposed the founding of the Metropolitan Police because it was thought that it would be more costly and less efficient than the existing system.

**Chris A Williams** specialises in the history of the justice system at the Open University



# SAMANTHA'S RECIPE CORNER



Every issue, picture editor **Samantha Nott** brings you a recipe from the past. This month it's soft and sweet almond cookies from sun-soaked Greek islands

## Amygdalota

Somewhere between soft marzipan and hard amaretti biscuits, these chewy and delicately flavoured almond cookies are a traditional sweet hailing from the Greek islands. The castle town of Monemvasia and the island of Mykonos both pride themselves on their impeccable amygdalota.

Almonds have been a staple of Greek cuisine for millennia and these sweet treats take their name from *amýgdalo*, the Greek word for the nut. Traditionally, the flourless almond mixture would be served up unbaked, moulded to resemble small pears. Since the mid-20th century, a half-moon shape has been more popular, but if you want to embrace the classic fruit shape, you can even add a clove to the top of the cookie to replicate a pear's stem.

Using only five ingredients, the recipe is very simple and should produce around 40 small cookies.

### INGREDIENTS

400g ground almonds  
100g sugar  
2 egg whites

50ml rose water  
Icing sugar for dusting

### METHOD

Mix the ground almonds with the sugar. This should resemble a fine powder.

Beat the egg whites into meringue. Add the meringue to the powdered almonds and sugar and mix gently to incorporate.

Form small, almond-shaped balls or pear shapes with your hands and then place them on a baking tray.

Bake at 120°C for 20-25 minutes.

Spray the amygdalota with rose water as soon as they come out of the oven and let them cool down.

Once at room temperature, roll in icing sugar to coat.

### VERDICT

"These amygdalota make the perfect after-dinner accompaniment to a strong cup of Greek coffee"

**Difficulty:** 2/10

**Time:** 1 hour

Recipe from  
[eatyourselfgreek.com](http://eatyourselfgreek.com)



Constable's  
*A Cornfield* recalls days  
when most Britons  
worked the land

## Q What were the 'Corn Laws' of the 19th century?

PJ Pronger, email

**A** The Corn Laws were late 18th and early 19th-century measures to protect the price of domestically grown grain. Imports were subject to swingeing duties, or were not permitted at all, until homegrown corn had reached a specific price.

During the Napoleonic Wars, these policies arguably made sense by encouraging domestic agriculture and reducing dependence on imports. But since bread was an essential part of the diet of an increasingly urbanised working class, the price of corn, particularly wheat, was of great importance. At times of economic downturn, or bad harvests, bread became unaffordable and many people starved, leading to riots.

A powerful and growing campaign to abolish the laws was spearheaded from 1839 by

the Anti-Corn Law League. The struggle over the controversial legislation is traditionally generalised as a dispute between the old landed elite, which wanted to protect its economic position, and the new, rising industrial elite, which wanted cheaper food for workers – and maybe also reduce their wages.

Things came to a head in 1845–46 with poor harvests and the Irish Famine. Prime minister Sir Robert Peel finally oversaw the repeal of the Corn Laws in a move that split the Tory Party. This is often painted as a key moment in the divide within the British ruling class during the 'long 19th century' – between free trade and protectionism, and Liberals and Tories.

Eugene Byrne is an author and journalist specialising in history

GETTY IMAGES



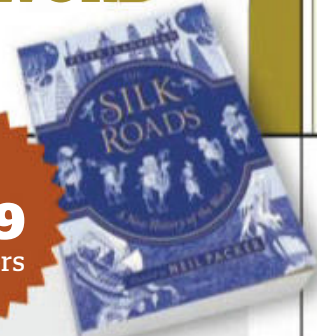
# PRIZE CROSSWORD

Where was the  
main residence of  
the Mughals?  
(see 27 across)



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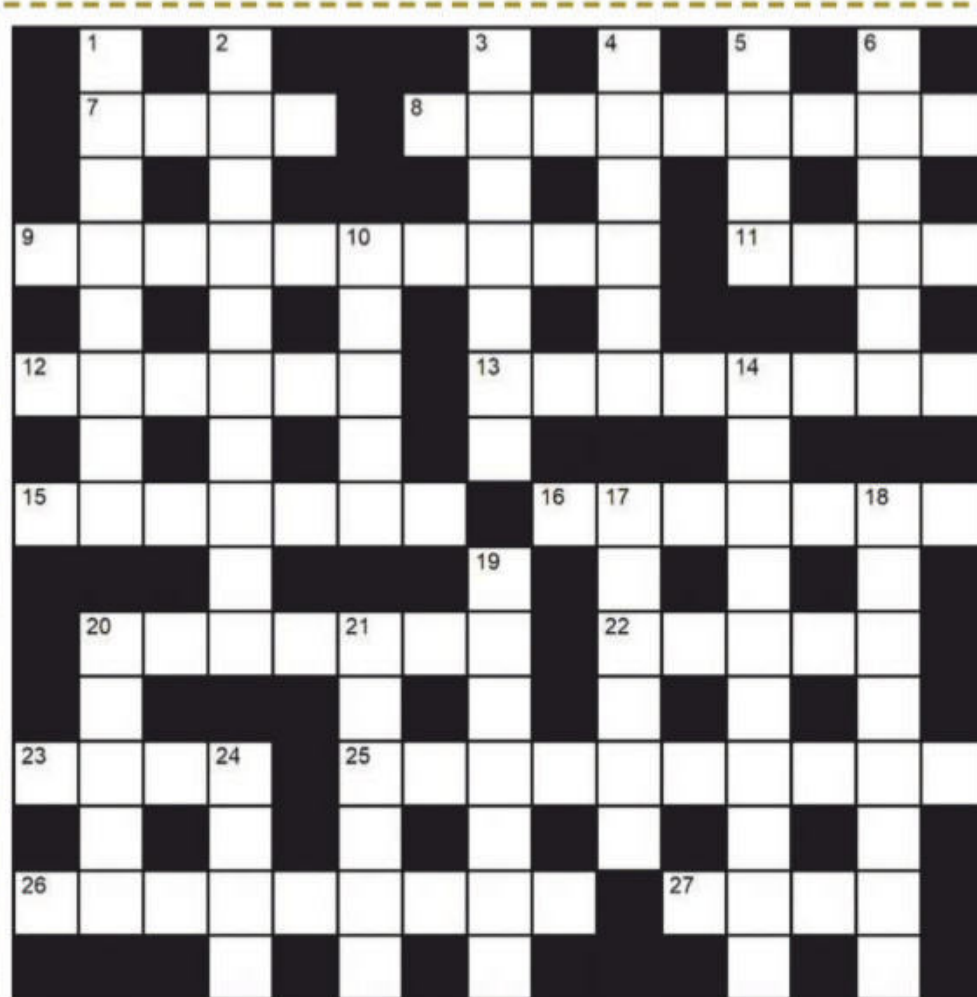
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### Across

- 7** Second World War coalition of Germany, Italy and Japan (4)  
**8** Hampshire town, established as major military base during the Crimean War (9)  
**9** The standard British military rifle in the First and Second World Wars (3-7)  
**11** First name of the influential modernist American poet who was charged with treason in 1945 (4)  
**12** A prehistoric standing stone (6)  
**13** The French premier who was held prisoner by the Vichy government (8)  
**15** Thomas, 19th-century economist and leading figure in the campaign for the Reform Bill of 1832 (7)  
**16** Member of a Semitic-speaking people occupying large parts of Mesopotamia from c2000 BC to c1700 BC (7)  
**20** Ancient Greek city-state, an ally of Sparta in the 5th-century BC Peloponnesian War (7)  
**22** Such remains were often depicted in the art of the Romanticist movement in the early 19th century (5)  
**23** (One spelling of) a form of the ancient Roman imperial title, used in Russia from the 16th century (4)  
**25** Sir Francis, creator of the spy network that secured the execution of Mary, Queen of Scots (10)  
**26** The 1859 Villafranca peace treaty resulted from this battle between France and Austria (9)  
**27** Red \_\_\_ in Agra, main residence of the Mughal emperors (4)

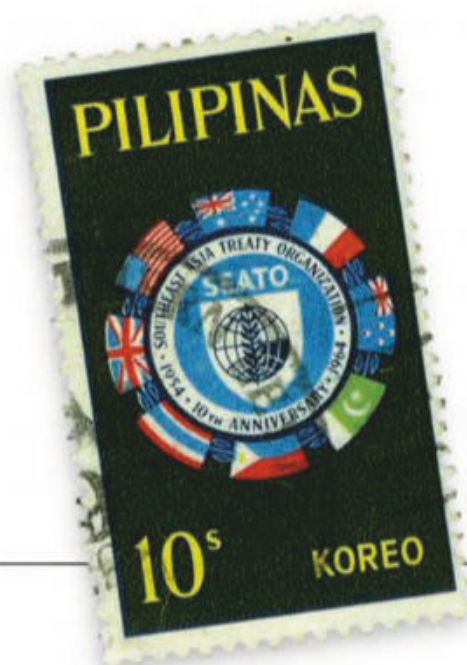
### Down

- 1** Sir Roger, the British diplomat who exposed atrocities in the Belgian Congo and elsewhere (8)  
**2** SEATO was one of the accomplishments of his first term as president (10)  
**3** Chilean family name, prominent in politics, including a socialist president (7)  
**4** Modern genetics derive from the experiments of this 19th-century Austrian in his abbey garden (6)  
**5** Robert, English lawyer and protestor against the Reformation, executed in 1537 (4)



- 6** President whose 'Doctrine' became a major influence on US foreign policy (6)  
**10** William, one of the founders of American Express and the famous US staging business (5)  
**14** One of the terminal towns on the world's first public railway (10)  
**17** Anglo-Saxon kingdom of England, which rose to dominance in the seventh century (6)  
**18** Series of early modern laws that linked eligibility for public office with the candidate's religious beliefs (4,4)

Which president was  
a key figure in the SEATO  
treaty being signed?  
(see 2 down)



- 19** Location of the first of the Nazi mass extermination camps (7)  
**20** Present-day city, once an ancient South American capital, made a World Heritage Site in 1983 (5)  
**21** Trent-side town with 12th-century castle, mostly destroyed in the English Civil Wars (6)  
**24** Thor Heyerdahl showed that such a vessel could have been used by ancient South Americans to reach Polynesia (4)

Compiled by **Eddie James**

### SOLUTION TO OUR DECEMBER 2018 CROSSWORD

**Across:** 5 Livy 7 Nobel Prize 11 Sutton Hoo 12 Athos 13/19 Edith Cavell 15 Doune 16 Lee 17 Delos 18 Incas 22 OSS 23 Byron 24 V-sign 25 Derby 26 Ramillies 29 Evacuation 30 Laos.

**Down:** 1 Plassey 2 Koch 4 Nicholas II 6 VAT 8 Plate 9 Easter 10 Kochel 14/3 Industrial Revolution 15 Desert Rats 20 Bowdler 21 Enosis 23 Bayeux 27 Moor 28 IRA.

### FIVE WINNERS OF THE STORY OF THE BRITISH ISLES IN 100 PLACES

T Yates, Lancashire; D Reid, Kent; R Beckett, London; L Heath, West Sussex; C Dunford, Northamptonshire

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"I've always felt that Richard III's besmirching by the Bard was Tudor propaganda and an attempt to curry favour with Elizabeth I"

*Stage and TV actor  
Robert Lindsay chooses*

## Richard III

1452-85

Richard III was king of England from 1483 until his death at the battle of Bosworth. He was the final king of the House of York and the Plantagenet dynasty. Accused of murdering the princes in the Tower, his reputation was blackened – some say unfairly – by Shakespeare's depiction of him as the murderous 'hunchback king'. In 2012 his body was discovered under a Leicester car park; three years later he was reburied in Leicester Cathedral.

### When did you first hear about Richard III?

As an actor – although it was only when I played him in a Royal Shakespeare Company production on tour and in London's West End in the late nineties that I really got to know the full story. I grew up in a Derbyshire mining village and at school we bypassed him for some reason; I get the feeling that there's almost been an attempt to write him out of history.

### What kind of person was he?

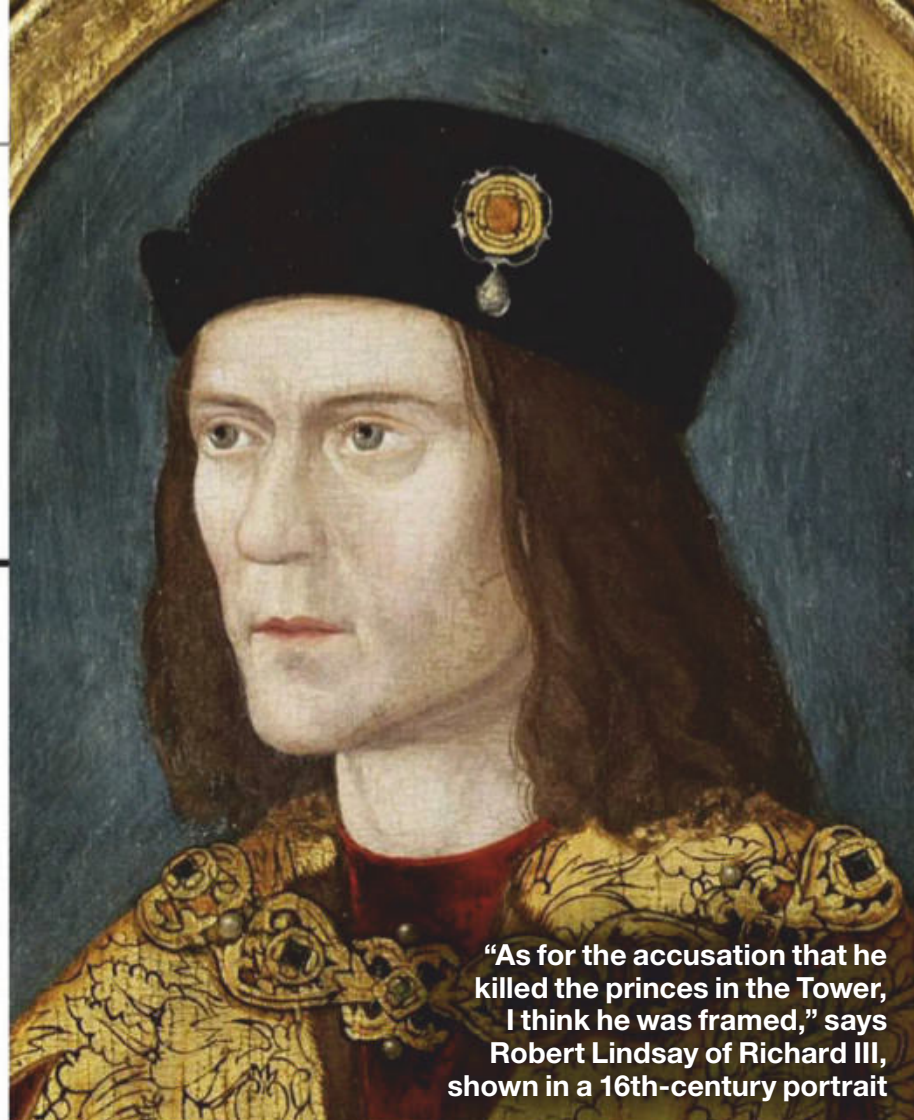
Well, following the discovery of his body and the tests carried out to confirm it was Richard III, I think we can say with some certainty that physically he wasn't much like Shakespeare's "poisonous bunch-back'd toad", although he did have scoliosis – curvature of the spine – a common complaint. I've always felt that his besmirching by the Bard was Tudor propaganda and an attempt to curry favour with Elizabeth I.

### What makes him a hero?

For me it's because he's been accused of terrible wrongs – and I hate slanderous lies that live on throughout history. This was a man who died a violent death at the battle of Bosworth. And remember, we're talking about the legitimate king of England! He was also a talented military leader and, as monarch, he passed some good laws. As for the accusation that he killed the princes in the Tower, I think he was framed.

### What was Richard III's finest hour?

In a strange way, perhaps his reburial at Leicester Cathedral in 2015. The service, at which the bishop of Leicester and the



"As for the accusation that he killed the princes in the Tower, I think he was framed," says Robert Lindsay of Richard III, shown in a 16th-century portrait

archbishop of Canterbury officiated – and at which Benedict Cumberbatch (a distant relative of the king) and I spoke – was a moving occasion. It helped reignite the debate over whether he was as villainous as Shakespeare alleged. I think the world has realised that his monstrous Richard III is not an accurate reflection – the real Richard was a much more nuanced figure.

### Is there anything you don't particularly admire about him?

Shakespeare's portrayal of him. If I was offered the part of Shakespeare's Richard III again, I couldn't do it – I just wouldn't be able to do it with any kind of honesty.

### Can you see any parallels between his life and your own?

No, although after a long run playing Richard – a man with curvature of the spine and one leg longer than the other – I was in a terrible state physically. I had a sciatic nerve problem and had to see a physiotherapist. Even now I get the odd stabbing pain.

### What do you think he would have made of the fuss surrounding the discovery of his body?

To go to Richard III's funeral service more than 500 years after his death was the most extraordinary experience. If there is life after death, you do wonder what he must be thinking.

### If you could meet Richard III, what would you ask him?

I'd ask: "Did you do it?" Actually, I've always been terrified of meeting royalty. Like most working-class people, I feel intimidated in such situations and never quite know what to say. **H**

*Robert Lindsay was talking to York Membery*

Robert Lindsay is an award-winning actor. He is making his pantomime debut in Richmond Theatre's *Peter Pan*, which runs until 6 January ([ATGTickets.com/Richmond](http://ATGTickets.com/Richmond))

### DISCOVER MORE

#### LISTEN AGAIN

► Hear Philippa Langley discuss Richard III on Radio 4's **Great Lives:** [bbc.co.uk/programmes/b04wv045](http://bbc.co.uk/programmes/b04wv045)





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